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## **Celluloid Television Culture**

**The Specificity of Film on Television: the Action-adventure  
Text as an Example of a Production and Textual Strategy,  
1955 – 1978.**

**Max Sexton**

**A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
Birkbeck, University of London, 2012.**



## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the thesis presented by me for examination of the PhD degree is solely my own work, other than where I have clearly indicated.



**Birkbeck, University of London**  
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Degree\_\_\_\_\_Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to re-examine the use of film on British television, 1955-78, in order to demonstrate that the production of drama on British television was more complex than in the existing supposition, that television drama was either shot 'live' or co-existed with the recording medium of film. Instead, the types of interaction will raise questions about the process of production and how the recording of programmes on film addressed the audience watching a domestic medium.

The thesis attempts to answer these questions by examining a form and mode of popular entertainment on British television that existed on film. The shot-on-film television series was a form that had been imported from the United States in the 1950s, but had been modified in Britain. The type of modification is shown to reveal how notions of value and quality were assigned to a television programme when a public service ethos determined the cultural discourse set by British television. The development of an export market and the internationalisation of British television will raise questions about the exact appeal of these programmes.

At the same time, indigenous modes of film production designed for the domestic consumption of television existed side-by-side with the professional ideologies associated with commercial film-making. These professional ideologies allowed for the development of television as an international commodity. However, they created a tension between separate modes of fictional television production. The thesis concludes that the creation of separate modalities in the British adventure series at various times interacted in the 1960s and 1970s, and led to it becoming a less stable object of analysis, which requires an exploration of the often contradictory ways in which a number of key programmes functioned.

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## **Acknowledgements and Thanks**

Alison Smith

Dr Michael Allen

Dr Matthew Gibson

Jim Goddard

Trevor Preston

Ted Childs

Johnny Goodman

Muir Sutherland

Stephen Pushkin

Roddy Buxton

The staff at the British Film Institute

The staff at the BBC Written Archives Centre

## **Introduction:**

### **Rationale: The Specificity of Film on Television, 1955-1978**

This thesis analyses the function, form and mode of British television in the period 1955-1978. It finds that historical accounts of British television as having a so-called essential nature - its ability to transmit images and sound instantaneously, and the live origination of programmes - ignore the use of film. The essential nature of television was its immediacy, which was the opposite of film's 'recorded' nature. However, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that during the two decades after the beginning of ITV, as film became increasingly an important part of television programming and production, it became central to the development of drama, promoting a fertile exchange between the forms and modes of film and television.

To examine this exchange, a series of texts within a chosen genre has been selected to ask how television's use of moving images on film as a technology and as a medium was affected by the institution at the time. The thesis provides examples of this process and its complexities, and demonstrates that there was nothing in the technologies of 35mm and 16mm film themselves that dictated how they would be used either in UK television or in Britain's television export market. Instead, the institution (the focus is on particular ITV companies, but not to the exclusion of the BBC) shaped the aesthetic form in which film was adapted to television to develop programmes within the British adventure series. The thesis will argue that this form is of interest because it was at the centre of many new developments in television as it went from a studio-bound 'live' production to shot-on-film production mixing location, soundstage interiors and stock shots and finally to be shot entirely on location.

Moreover, the economic and technological changes controlled by the institution were used as a cultural discourse of value, quality and judgment which, if not wholly specific to British television, were derived in large part from its production practices and its professional ideologies. Consequently, television was not only a technological invention, but also a cultural process that brought the social and technological together. The thesis proposes three stages to an analysis of cultural practice within television history. First, the socio-economic - how television evolved into a new social space in the late 1950s and 1960s, and the institutional constraints and determinations it experienced at the time. Second, the technological development and application of the recording mediums of 35mm film and, ultimately, 16mm film in the 1960s and early 1970s as methods of programme construction. Third, the representation of the technology of film on television, how it became known and understood by practitioners and producers at the time.

One frequently made distinction between film and television has been around the issue of image quality. In most of the period under observation, the television image in Britain consisted of a relatively low-definition picture of 405 lines before adopting a standard of 625 lines on all channels from November 1969.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the television image has had less definition than film images, although the programmes being examined were shot on film. As Noel Carroll explains:

...TV has an impoverished image (marked by low resolution and small scale) versus film's informationally dense imagery; the TV image is less detailed, whereas the film image is elaborate; in TV talk is dominant, while in film the image is dominant; TV elicits the glance, but film

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<sup>1</sup> BBC2 was to use a standard of 625 lines from its inception which older television sets were unable to receive, although some could be adapted to do so. Colour (PAL) was added to the 625 line image in 1967 for BBC2 and used on all channels from 15 November 1969.

engenders the gaze; TV is in the present tense, whereas film is in the past tense; TV narration is segmented and serial, but film narration is uninterrupted and closed; and, given the previous distinction, the object of attention in TV is the flow of programming, while the object of attention in film is the individual, integrated, closed story (the freestanding feature film).<sup>2</sup>

According to this argument, due to television and film's apparently essential natures, it was possible to demonstrate that television narrative did not use a style that depended on the visual literacy of film-making. However, as this thesis aims to demonstrate, the atypical appeal of particular shows once they had been shot on film, because of their use of novelty as a contribution and response to television flow, meant that television spectatorship, rather than a 'diverting gaze', could, by the mid 1960s, become more of a sophisticated act of concentrated viewing. Therefore, television and film do not have essential natures and, while there were technological differences, the differences should not mask the similarities. The thesis will establish that the development of the British adventure series as an example of television modality, due to the set of cultural and economic circumstances surrounding it, allowed for a range of responses to televisual flow to develop more complex narratives.

Therefore, the question of television's function, which starts this thesis, is the question of 'television itself', its method of address and modalities that need to be acknowledged to contextualise fully the use of the adventure text and its series form. Some of the characteristics of the television adventure series – from the use of black and white and colour 35mm film in the 1960s and, finally, 16mm in the 1970s - raise

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<sup>2</sup> Noel Carroll, *Engaging the Moving Image* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 270.

questions of interpretation and require an understanding of the phenomenology of television by making reference necessary to several key transformative moments: specifically, 1955; 1964-65; 1973-74 and 1976-77 to form new understandings of what these shows were able to offer that was different from some dominant paradigms of television described by Noel Carroll. However, although the thesis analyses certain programmes in some detail, it does not set out to be about textual analysis. Instead ideological themes and stylistics are examined to explain wider cultural processes.

The thesis argues that an approach that attempts only to situate a few of the popular adventure series of the 1960s and early to mid 1970s within theoretically delineated generic boundaries (i.e. an aesthetic approach to genre), closes down the possibility of exploring the often contradictory ways in which a number of key programmes functioned. Instead, there is an approach that explores how the various production discourses at ATV/ITC (Associated Television and the Incorporated Television Company, 1955-82 and 1958-98), ABC-TV (Associated British Corporation Television, 1956-68) Thames Television (1968-92) and its film subsidiary, Euston Films (1971-94), engaged with a range of expectations to do with the representation of action and creation of a filmic narrative space. This can help to understand how a television text was a set of culturally and historically constructed conventions. Moreover, if the limits can be proved to be historically specific rather than medium specific, they can be determined empirically, rather than only theoretically. This, in turn, can be used to examine how particular areas or modalities of meanings within the use of film on television were created within the adventure series that revise some understandings about the uses of creativity in television and its relationship between television's 'creator' and the 'informed' audience.

## Literature Review

### Television Form and Mode

Film as a technology has been used, adapted and implemented in particular ways within television. The thesis provides examples of this process and its complexities and demonstrates how a system of production economics on British television shaped the aesthetic form which film was used to develop. Television is not only a technological invention but a process that brings the social and technological together. Raymond Williams argued that 'one of the innovating forms of television is television itself.'<sup>3</sup> Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow describe television's innovating form thus:

[Television] cannot be allowed to confine 'television itself' to a technology or a single isolable element of the viewing experience: 'television itself' is everywhere in television, everywhere in the operation of 'form' and 'content' that a communication based analysis takes for granted.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the ideological has been there from the start, including popular programming, rather than regarding television as an absolute fixed category. However, this position can reduce technology to its ideological effects, and makes reference to any historical situation unnecessary. The question of 'television itself', its method of address and modalities, its constraints and determinations needs to be acknowledged.

The phenomenology of television is important here because one of its key modes is the pattern of flow. The discursive unities of the single programme are

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1974), pp. 76-77.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow, 'Television: a World in Action', *Screen*, vol.18, no.2, 1977, pp. 7-60 (p. 8).

dispersed and two of the characteristics of flow are audience distraction and the transience of programmes. However, television imposes logic and organisation on flow through scheduling, although this can further constrain the determinations of a single programme. Given these facts, it can be argued that flow totalises the function of television as Williams has argued it does, although John Ellis charges that Williams overlooks the fact that television produces unrelated but discrete segments which have become the building blocks of larger forms.<sup>5</sup> For Ellis, the segmented character of television in, for example, the soap opera and quiz show was developed because it met the requirements of the television economy for a regular and extensive supply of programmes.

Nevertheless, flow continues to package an ideological message for the spectator and Williams' discussion of it implies a hegemonic control of its audience. As a result, Williams was interested in the interplay of shaping influences between technological potential and its applications informed by political and commercial advantage. In place of a technological determinism, he proposed the causality of technical developments in television that, he argued, could be used to reveal the interrelations between institution, technology and society.<sup>6</sup> For Williams, there was an increasingly powerful televisual system that would continue to produce a unifying and singular cultural form, serving both state and commercial interests and threatening to become more dominant as time went by.

Jane Feuer has refined further the idea of flow by suggesting that it is segmentation without closure, but, crucially, she adds two qualifications to her

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<sup>5</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, Revised Edition, 1992), pp. 119-122.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, *Television*, p. 14.

discussion. First, she emphasises that flow forms an integral component of television as a commercial form; it is planned by programmers to maximise viewing figures. Therefore, 'Flow as such is neither natural nor technologically determined. It is a historically specific result of [US] network practice...'<sup>7</sup> Second, she extends the idea of flow to the viewing situation. 'The set is in the home, as part of the furniture of one's daily life...one may intercept the flow at any point'.<sup>8</sup> The idea that it is possible to disrupt flow both inside and outside television is used in this thesis and that flow is not a trait of television, but rather a characteristic of a certain type of television. To regard flow as a unique quality of television, neglects important historical conditions.

A meditation on television can consider its essence rather than its specificity and risks ignoring the aesthetic motivation and consumer interest which led its technologies to become meaningful. For Graham Roberts, television has been a technology and medium simultaneously.<sup>9</sup> For Roberts, television was initially a medium that implied delivery, transmission, communication, and flow. Later, it became a technology that led to production and the knowledge of making. Television, which had first been a medium, gradually became a technology.<sup>10</sup> This thesis attempts to apply these various ideas, in particular as an examination of the process by which television ceased to be only a relay device and became a sophisticated user of (film) technology. An examination of the evolution of television

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<sup>7</sup> Jane Feuer, 'The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology', in E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches – an Anthology* (Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1983), pp. 12-22 (p. 16).

<sup>8</sup> Feuer, 'The Concept of Live Television', p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Roberts, 'Audio-visual Production Cultures: Convergence and Resistance', in Graham Roberts and Dorota Ostrowska (eds), *European Cinemas in the Television Age*, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 125-143 (p. 128).

<sup>10</sup> Roberts, 'Audio-visual Production Cultures: Convergence and Resistance', p.128.



demonstrates how television collapsed the dichotomies between the ‘medium’ and ‘technology’ using a production discourse that restores *intention* to the process of development. The questions of how far the production process was guided by institutionalised conventions, however, is one that the thesis seeks to answer in its analysis of the function and form of television, specifically the development of the British adventure *telefilm* and its typologies of colour, lighting and picture quality.<sup>11</sup> These are broken down in order to examine how they were used to begin separate discourses ranging from commodification and service, modernity and obsolescence, and, finally, debates to do with ‘gritty’ realism. In this way, stylistics can be used to articulate wider cultural processes.

Television has been used as an audio-visual medium and as a medium of moving image: its technology can offer a basis for comparison between the ontology of liveness and film. John Caughie has described how early television and television drama was limited to the transmission of images rather than the telling of stories. For him, the production of live images was not a technological constraint, but the logical form for a medium more concerned with relaying the world and disseminating

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<sup>11</sup> The telefilm was a term that described the recording of the shot-on-film television series. There is a distinction between the telefilm and the telerecording or the recording of a live television programme on film. In the 1950s-1960s, the telefilm was a term that was often used to describe a television series, which embodied action and spectacle, and which would be exported as well as shown in Britain. It was disparaged by many British critics at the time, failing to meet the standards of ‘quality’ and ‘value’ that, they argued, could be found in the live or videotaped studio drama. The term telefilm should not be confused with the made-for-television film, which appeared in the 1970s, and did not adopt the series form, although there are obvious parallels. The made-for-television film has been described as ‘a genre that combined the...distinctive narrative structures and production techniques of television with the basic formal concerns of Hollywood melodrama...’ See William Lafferty, ‘Film and Television’, in Gary R. Edgerton (ed.), *Films and the Arts in Symbiosis* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 273-309 (p. 296).

information.<sup>12</sup> Television was an aesthetic medium from the start, but the assertion of immediacy and ‘liveness’ became transformed into an aesthetic virtue in the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the popularity of the aesthetic of immediacy, according to John Ellis, can be found not only in the differing ontologies of liveness and recording, but in the increasingly domestic use of moving images as television aligned itself with the social organisation of the home and family as its site of consumption.<sup>14</sup> For Caughie, the preference for live transmission on television can be imagined as an early television of attractions comparable to the early cinema of attractions: ‘While the “cinema of attractions”, however, was to be based on spectacle, “the television of attractions” would be firmly founded on the immediacy and liveness of the everyday’.<sup>15</sup>

Charles Barr has discussed the legacy of live television that seeks to develop analyses of the developing formal systems of early television.<sup>16</sup> For example, the telerecordings of most of the *Quatermass* serials were only ‘television films’ because they were recorded on film, but were not constructed or edited as film, although they may have used some film inserts. According to Barr, television drama may have been shot on film, but it was different from film. It was only later in the 1960s and 1970s that shooting on film meant that the studio drama was replaced by shooting on location on 16mm. Barr notes that in Britain, unlike in the US, if a growing

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<sup>12</sup> John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism, and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 30-56.

<sup>13</sup> Jason Jacobs, *Television Drama: the Intimate Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 111-115.

<sup>15</sup> Caughie, *Television Drama*, p. 33. Tom Gunning was to first use the term, ‘cinema of attractions’, to explain the origins of film style in the cinema prior to World War One. See ‘The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-garde’, in Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (eds), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), pp. 56-62.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Barr, ‘They Think It’s All Over: The Dramatic Legacy of Live Television’ in John Hill and Martin McLoone (eds), *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations between Film and Television* (Luton: John Libbey Media, 1996), pp. 47-75.

proportion of drama was shot on film, they were still referred to as 'plays'.

Consequently, the TV plays-on-film were distinct from 'films'. However, as this thesis will demonstrate, the development of the telefilm from the 1950s complicates some of the notions that television drama was either live or continued to be planned, shot and edited as a live play. Instead, the telefilm can find its antecedents more in the 'B' movie (see chapter two) as well as adapting film and filmic methods from the cinema for an audience watching at home. For example, chapter three will examine how lighting for 35mm film was adapted to the shooting of a television series.

At the same time, Jamie Sexton has examined the relationship between aesthetic innovation and technological change, in particular the impact of 16mm film-making.<sup>17</sup> For him film was only gradually introduced into the television production process because it was believed by many working within the industry that it was a 'live' or immediate medium. That is to say there was no time gap between the 'capture' of an image and its transmission, unlike cinema images, which are recorded and will be shown later. From the 1960s, the adherence to liveness was gradually transformed by the increasing use of film, especially 16mm film, within television production. For Sexton, the use of 16mm brought television drama closer to documentary in many respects. The use of 16mm also marked a resistance to dominant occupational ideologies about the use of film borrowed from the cinema. The use of 16mm marked not so much a shift to a cinematic mode, but a desire for a greater immediacy, leaving the cinematic mode behind. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that by shooting on film there was a clear separation between shooting

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<sup>17</sup> Jamie Sexton, 'Televerite Hits Britain: Documentary, Drama and the Growth of 16mm Filmmaking in British Television', *Screen*, vol. 44, no. 4, Winter 2003, pp. 429-444.

and editing or between production and exhibition to the spectator. Crucially, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, the use of film within the popular drama of the adventure series also left the aesthetic of liveness behind, which marked television's confinement to the studio. Mobility became an important aesthetic quality as well as immediacy. The use of film on television, as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s, was not only a borrowing from commercial forms of film-making, but a hybrid between older and newer modes of shooting and editing types of action.

To fully understand the varying uses of film, it has to be realised that from about 1955 to 1978 there was also a gradual transition between a television limited by a service ethic and restricted to an intimate style and newer values of competition and the commodification of the popular taste of the audience. Older values were not eliminated but were placed into contradiction, or sometimes conflict, with other values that can be traced back to commercial developments in the US, described by Vance Kepley and William Boddy.<sup>18</sup> Janet Thumim has written how in the UK the commodification of popular taste led to an eventual blurring between light entertainment and 'serious' drama, or low and high culture, by creating new forms and categories of television fiction.<sup>19</sup> However, the industrialisation of television during the 1960s did not always produce a conflict or contradiction between the 'free' individual and the institution. Thumim and Johnson have shown in their own critical writings how the domestic setting of the television audience meant that it was possible

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<sup>18</sup> Vance Kepley and William Boddy, 'From "Frontal Lobes" to the "Bob-and-Bob" Show: NBC Management and Programming Strategies, 1949-65', in Tino Balio (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 41-89. The chapter analyses how the American TV network, NBC, went from live programmes to predominantly showing telefilms.

<sup>19</sup> Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women and the Box* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 119-121.

for the creation of modalities of meanings and generic patterns of thought between ‘popular’ and ‘serious’ forms of drama that transcended the dichotomy between old and new values based on either a service ethic or profit.

By the mid 1960s, developments had led to a type of programming that could incorporate physical action and character; the popular and the serious. The production of filmed entertainment aligned the aesthetic with the economic in the UK, which, according to Cathy Johnson, was the ‘attempt to create aesthetically valuable “public service” television that will also appeal to a wide (and international) audience...’<sup>20</sup> The thesis will argue that the shift from live to film programme formats and the new production methods of the 1960s and 1970s meant that multiple modalities existed within the adventure series with new cultural and economic values representing newer and distinctive types of programming. These were concerned with the idea of service *and* profit or realism and entertainment. It is the tension between these multiple modalities which is explored in some of the shows of the 1960s and early to mid 1970s.

### **Interpreting Television’s Film Aesthetics**

The thesis proposes that the creation of the British adventure series in the 1960s and 1970s aided the process of the reintegration of the film technologies of the cinema and television in the UK, but simultaneously also posed a new issue as to what extent film was being used differently in a domestic medium rather than as a theatrical medium. The thesis will examine how the 1960s and 1970s in British television was

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<sup>20</sup> Johnson, *Telefantasy*, p. 148.

the time of evolutionary transformation in the use of film that no longer constructed the television viewer as only being distracted by its small screen or image quality, and instead paints a more complex picture of the 'active' text.

One of the early theoreticians of television's aesthetics has been Stuart Hall.<sup>21</sup> He claimed in the 1970s that there was no significant difference between the language of the old and new media of cinema and television. The aim of his argument, according to Hall, was not to fetishise any longer the live element of television as untransformed, because its images were all mediated. Instead, Hall argues that 'though television continually cannibalises and hybridises the content and presentational forms of other media and events/occasions, the universal set of practices by which this heterogeneous raw material was transformed into television was a set that derived from the cinema.'<sup>22</sup> The claim by Hall that there is no significant difference between moving images on television and at the cinema is highlighted and questioned in this thesis because the adventure series did use a visual distinctiveness to establish new modalities. At times, it used film technology adapted for television in the form of, for example, an internationalised *mise-en-scène* and expressive lighting, to separate itself from the televisual flow, but, according to Hall, television only differs from film not in terms of *how* it communicates, but *what* it communicates.

Later cultural studies commentators such as David Morley have, like Hall, demonstrated the possibility of an ideological hegemony within television through which, within Britain, the aesthetics associated with 'good television' have been pre-

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<sup>21</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Television and Culture', *Sight and Sound*, vol.45, no.4, Autumn 1976, pp. 246-252.

<sup>22</sup> Hall, 'Television and Culture', p. 249.

determined. But at the same time, Morley has argued for the possibility of differences in the ‘mass’ or family audience imagined by the schedulers.<sup>23</sup> The thesis acknowledges the possibility of the ethnography of the audience, while accepting that this is much more difficult to bring to an analysis that depends on texts made forty or fifty years ago that have been removed from their original viewing contexts. Nevertheless, the analysis of the programmes and articles from *TV Times*, *Television Mail* and elsewhere can start to identify how the audience reacted to a particular show. The thesis demonstrates how a socially produced way of talking or thinking about a topic was represented by the development of a narrative and style that could depend on using film for television.

There is an underlying tension in the thesis between saying that film opened out the televisual experience and rescued television drama from its theatrical influences (where it would have continued to be a recording device for a pre-existing performance), and Hall’s criticism of television as a ‘weak’ medium. The popularity of the adventure series in Britain (ITC’s *Danger Man* (1960-66), *The Prisoner* (1967-68), and ABC-TV/Thames Television’s *The Avengers* (1961-69), *Special Branch* (1973-74) suggests, as I hope to prove, that film did give to television audiences a sense of the ‘epic’ that would lead to the possibility of further experimentation. These shows were nominally espionage-related dramas, but they could deconstruct the spy genre, though in different ways and often with different intentions. They incorporated elements borrowed from many other genres – sci-fi, thrillers, crime - and

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<sup>23</sup> David Morley and Charlotte Brunson, *Everyday Television: Nationwide* (London: British Film Institute, 1978). The study reveals some of the ways in which the BBC’s *Nationwide* constructs an image of its audience as both a national audience and an audience made up of ordinary individuals.

strayed from the standards of their genre differently as they became politically charged, satirical or both.<sup>24</sup>

The earlier view of television as impoverishing its viewer has been debated by other commentators such as the British Cultural Theorist John Tulloch who argues that, in addition to the complexity of the television text (or sometimes relative lack of it), there is the complexity of the process of producing meanings and pleasures in culture. At the same time, this thesis does not adopt an audience-based methodology in an analysis of television because, as Meaghan Morris has pointed out, the Ur-thesis of this type of Cultural Studies runs perilously close to the banal observation that ‘people in modern mechanised societies are complex and contradictory; mass cultural texts are complex and contradictory; therefore people using them produce complex and contradictory culture.’<sup>25</sup>

Instead, this thesis makes use of several approaches that examine the complex link between television’s form and mode at historic moments. Nevertheless, Tulloch’s approach is useful because it allows for an ‘analytic mutuality’ between the agency of directors, producers and the audience and a range of production which he has found in reception spaces in his study of *Doctor Who*.<sup>26</sup> In this way, Tulloch was able to argue that the author might be the first person to fix meanings within the text,

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<sup>24</sup> David Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice: Form and Ideology in Television Series* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 72-119. See also Toby Miller, *The Avengers* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), pp. 93-116.

<sup>25</sup> Meaghan Morris, ‘Banality in Cultural Studies’ quoted in David Morley, ‘Where the Global Meets the Local: Notes from the Sitting Room’, *Screen*, vol.32, no.1, Spring 1991, pp. 1-15 (p. 3).

<sup>26</sup> John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado, *Doctor Who: the Unfolding Text* (London: Macmillan, 1983) and John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado, ‘Send-up: Authorship and Organisation’, in Tony Bennett (ed.), *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production Reading* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 293-314 (pp. 294-5).



but it was possible to see potential in the popular television series because ultimately it was what the audience did with it that was important.

James Chapman has been the prime source for the generic origins and the initial fixed meanings of many of the adventure series for television, and he has found their antecedents in the sensational spy thriller of popular literature and cinema. Moreover, he has analysed its development as a discourse that sought to defend the British Empire followed by other discourses as the genre was forced to adapt to decolonisation during the 1960s and incorporated newer values around conspicuous consumption, including tourism to exotic countries and locales and sexual pleasure.<sup>27</sup> Chapman has investigated these changes within the Bond films as well as popular adventure shows on TV.<sup>28</sup> His work has built on earlier criticism of the spy thriller in literature by Michael Denning who has argued that this type of action adventure privileged a national consciousness over class; the threat coming from those who placed class over nation.<sup>29</sup> David Buxton has argued that the tradition of ‘snobbery with violence’ was complicated in the James Bond films as Bond became more of a ‘man of the people’ and a classless moderniser. Patriotism and duty were preserved but individual autonomy would also be highly regarded and become a source of pleasure as well as danger.<sup>30</sup> The thesis begins with this reading of the genre in chapter one, but is interested to explore how the adventure text on television was able

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<sup>27</sup> James Chapman, *Licence to Thrill: a Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 31. On the last point, Chapman uses an argument by Michael Denning that the Bond films can be understood as an early form of mass pornography within a consumer society.

<sup>28</sup> James Chapman, *Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002)

<sup>29</sup> Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987)

<sup>30</sup> Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, p. 77.

to extend the sensational spy thriller with other styles and modes such as the detective, sleuth and private eye narratives, because of the fluid nature of television form.

In her analysis of the television genre of telefantasy, Catherine Johnson has shown how an early science-fiction programme, *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953) and its sequels, were negotiated in relation to the dominant notion in the 1950s of television as an intimate medium, but also the novelty they brought to television.<sup>31</sup> By comparing a range of historical and international case studies, the expectations of Johnson's chosen genre have been proved to be *historically* and *medium* specific because she has shown the different ways in which certain discourses to do with television aesthetics, allied to types of production, can recur across different historical contexts. This is a valuable approach, which this thesis will employ to demonstrate how the diachronic development of the text within the television adventure series was negotiated in relation to dominant aesthetical and social notions during the 1950s-1970s on British television.

In the period being examined, within the British public service broadcasting tradition, a realistic aesthetic (socio-cultural verisimilitude) was dominant – the old values of service and 'liveness'. Socio-cultural verisimilitude informs many British telefilms, including shows which are thought within the popular imagination to have used an aesthetic of Pop Art. Cathy Johnson has offered the following useful schema to compare serious and popular drama on British TV during the 1960s:<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Catherine Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), pp. 19-41.

<sup>32</sup> Johnson, *Telefantasy*, p.46.

| <b>‘Serious’ Drama</b>        | <b>‘Popular’ Drama</b>   |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Social realist                | Action-adventure/Generic |
| Deals with social concerns    | Stylish and playful      |
| Challenging and controversial | Entertaining and popular |
| Politically motivated         | Commercially motivated   |
| Primarily BBC                 | Primarily ITV            |

These oppositions are too reductive if accepted *prima facie*. However, as Johnson explains, these oppositions, in fact, offer recognition of a range and multiplicity of histories of television in terms of form and production context and the possibility of re-working generic verisimilitude, extending it and transforming them altogether; as indeed, to use one example, was the case during the making of Euston Films’ *Special Branch* (1973-74). To claim that ITV was capable of producing populist TV against the stuffy paternalism of the outmoded BBC falls into a trap in part created by those who campaigned most for independent television and the end of monopoly. There is a need to think across and beyond these narrow binary oppositions to make a comparative study. This can form a more complete understanding of popular TV during the twenty years after the end of the BBC monopoly that also, as I hope to prove, finds points of continuity between the 1960s telefilm and the early to mid 1970s gritty realist adventure dramas shot on 16mm as opposed to the glossiness of 35mm film.

For Chapman, an earlier lack of critical attention afforded popular television in the 1960s was due to its episodic structure, which, because of its repetitive and

formulaic nature, had resisted conventional methods of filmic or literary analysis.<sup>33</sup> He has discussed how critical opinion of popular television of the time can be interpreted as a class notion of the mass audience ‘...docile, comatose, undemanding – [they] have been conditioned to sit in their armchairs without moving, only daring such an individualistic act as changing channels or switching the set off...’<sup>34</sup> For Chapman, this attitude was indicative of the cultural snobbery that existed in Britain at the time among many critics. Moreover, a bias by contemporary British television reviewers can be viewed as part of a wider suspicion of mass culture:

[This view] echoes the view of the Frankfurt School intellectuals who despised the standardised nature of all mass-produced popular culture and held its consumers to be no more than passive dupes who accepted uncritically all they were served up in the name of entertainment.<sup>35</sup>

However, as the thesis seeks to demonstrate, this historical critique of how a popular text on television works is too simplistic. This thesis goes further than Chapman by seeking to establish how the television series can be regarded as a cultural form that, to a degree, demonstrates a constant dynamic between similarity and difference. Furthermore, this can be used to account for the fluidity of television genre, opening the possibility of an improved understanding of the growingly greater stylistic and narrative complexity in the adventure series.

In the 1960s, the new media landscape embodied counter-culture and consumer values that opposed the idea that the television audience was passive or alienated. The idea that there was an important link between films, mass

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<sup>33</sup> James Chapman, *Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Chapman, *Saints and Avengers*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

communications and the arts produced an intellectual ferment in the 1960s from which would develop a coherent theory of film as a popular art. At this time, Lawrence Alloway and Richard Hamilton were proponents of understanding the iconography in American culture by examining the popular arts in the context of the culture that had produced them and which would consume them. Alloway wrote about his theory of the popular arts in *Cambridge Opinion* in 1959.<sup>36</sup> This notion of popular art was a challenge to the assumptions about cultural hierarchies. The erosion of the distinction between high and popular culture was leading to, in Alloway's terms, an 'expansionist esthetics' that could regard advertising, colour photography, (big screen films), early English TV and automobile styling on equal terms with the fine arts.<sup>37</sup> My thesis explores the theories of Pop Art and how valid they are to an understanding of a mass or popular television adventure series of the 1960s. However, rather than take a macro-view of the impact of Pop Art on television, it finds that its use was more tentative and specific. It was also in opposition to the dominant aesthetic tradition of realism on British television, although the celebration of modernity allowed for its limited use.

The thesis examines other commentators of the time such as Marshall McLuhan and the representation in *The Prisoner* of technology's relationship to human perception, specifically television. McLuhan can be useful here because for him television was an integral medium that forced an interaction among components of experience that had been scattered and separated. The electronic media are 'so

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<sup>36</sup> Lawrence Alloway, 'The Long Front of Culture', reprinted in Richard Kalina (ed.), *Imagining the Present: Context, Content, and the Role of the Critic* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 61-64.

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence Alloway, 'Pop Art: the Words', *Topics in American Art since 1945* (New York: Norton, 1975), pp. 119-22.

persuasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered,' he explained.<sup>38</sup>

Other commentators, such as Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Roszak, decried the technocracy that they believed was alienating.<sup>39</sup> For them television, its advertising and ephemeral meanings were a product of mass culture that was impoverished aesthetically and politically. At the heart of this theory is the notion that television exists as an ideological state apparatus alongside the general media that produce in people the tendency to behave and think in socially acceptable ways. A negative view of mass culture, which can be found in the writings of more contemporary accounts by Fredric Jameson, can be confounded by further reading of selected programmes in this thesis.<sup>40</sup>

In Britain, there was a suspicion during the 1950 and 1960s of 'creeping Americanisation' and much critical opinion, both inside and outside television, was in favour of the videotaped or live single play, which was in the service of a public ethic:

...a form of cultural snobbery dictated that the majority of popular television programming, since it was not 'art', was inherently damaging to its audiences and therefore could be said neither to inform nor to educate while it entertained. A further dimension to this cultural anxiety was the imbrication of American values with the British perception

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<sup>38</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message: an Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964) and Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970)

<sup>40</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Reading without Interpretation: Postmodernism and the Video-text', in Nigel Fabb (ed.), *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments Between Language and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 199-223.

of popular culture, which in turn tied in with post-war resentment of increasing American global power and influence.<sup>41</sup>

The service ethic, which was mostly pastoral, could be applied to a mass medium, but this thesis will argue that a greater use of style found within the telefilm and the adventure series meant that a televisual form that was suspected of being ‘transatlantic’ demanded a more complex reading than was recognised at the time of the original production of such programmes. By observing the shifting of the meaning of entertainment and realism as television style changed, it can be seen to have been used to develop a relationship between a television series and a highly differentiated audience, including one that was international.

Part of the increased semiotic density of television can be traced to how television genres appear to have a greater tendency than at the cinema to recombine *across* genre lines.<sup>42</sup> Unlike television, Feuer has argued that film genres have a greater tendency to draw upon their own predecessors so that the Western and musical have developed by recombining and commenting upon earlier instances of their own genre. In this way, it is possible to keep generic boundaries relatively distinct at the cinema. Feuer has shown how the horizontal recombination of TV programmes points to the limits of understanding genre as it is applied to film. Moreover, John Hartley has suggested that television is a ‘leaky’ medium whose meanings constantly spill over into other areas of life. In fact, Hartley has claimed that ‘The object of study is colossal, chaotic, complex. There seems to be no such

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<sup>41</sup> Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women, and the Box* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 130.

<sup>42</sup> Jane Feuer, ‘Genre Study and Television’ in Robert C. Allen (ed.), *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 113-133 (p. 131).

“thing” as “Television”, whose natural properties can be described by scientific methods...As a result...the best that we can hope for is not the academic discipline of “Television”, but the more modest “television studies”.<sup>43</sup> This can be used to think further about television not as a discrete series of programmes or texts but as a flow that merges homogeneous programmes into a continuous cultural experience. However, writing in the 1990s, Hartley sees in televisual flow the textual openness of television as the holding of viewers in the loose grip of the programme.

The tension between fixed textual meanings and a ‘leaky’ medium, and an increased emphasis on discourse and the reader, can reduce the prime position granted to the text. If programme content can be analysed as a signifying system, a theory of discourse suggests that there are socially produced ways of talking or thinking about a topic. A television text can be made up of different discourses, defined by its signifying systems, including contradictory ones. However, an alternative method of thinking about a programme can be using ideas of authorship that seek interpretive consistency. As we have seen the first meanings in a text are constructed by the author(s) of the television programme. Therefore, it becomes important to extend an ethnographic approach beyond the audience to those that were institutionally responsible for the programme, again in ways similar to work done by John Tulloch.

In the mid 1970s, Manuel Alvarado and Edward Buscombe wrote about the conflict between the free individual and the institution in order to define authorship

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<sup>43</sup> John Hartley, *Uses of Television* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 18.



within television.<sup>44</sup> In television drama, they argued, creativity is marked by individual contributions as a form of authorship. Yet, Alvarado and Buscombe's account of *Hazell* was able to demonstrate that television is an industrialising process that can have an effect on producers as well as other creative workers. This industrialising process offers a neat point of departure in the thesis by examining the difficulty of achieving 'distinction' within the studio at a time when it was seen as becoming an area of low particularity. The signifying systems in *Hazell* were originally, at least, informed by both an indigenous and Hollywood filmic practice as a marker of cultural value rather than a return to the intimacy of the British television studio.

Alvarado and Buscombe's account of the videotaped show, *Hazell*, reveals how the studio as a site of authorship was further problematised by the demarcated use of labour which meant that creativity was a divisive term in the 1970s. *Hazell* was a programme that was conceived to be filmic and stylish, but their book reveals how definitions of authorship in film-making could be in conflict with notions of creativity in television, between shooting in the electronic studio and on a film set. The thesis uses this argument to address directly the issues surrounding the roles of 'creative' practitioners within television and of labour relations that sought to create a division between those working within the electronic studio and those filming on location. By returning to questions of television authorship it is possible to understand how they affected shows of the 1970s made by both Thames

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<sup>44</sup> Manuel Alvarado and Edward Buscombe, *Hazell* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), pp. 10-21.

Television/Euston Films and the ‘freedom’ offered by working either on film or within the electronic studio.

This literature review has identified some of the findings of other academic writers, and the thesis seeks to bring ideas together within Television Studies to produce a synoptic analysis that takes an extra-textual approach when examining several older television programmes in terms of their institutional and professional practices, as well as their narrative and generic structures.

## Methodology: Archival Research and Interviews

The thesis makes use of archival research, particularly with regards to tracing chronologically the main changes in the use of film for television generally and in the adventure series specifically. Much of this information has come from a mix of consumer and trade based contemporary periodicals such as *Radio Times*, *TV Times*, *Television Mail/Broadcast*, *Kinematograph Weekly*, *Television: the Journal of the Royal Television Society*, *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, *Film and Television Technician*, among other periodicals kept at the British Film Institute library in London.<sup>45</sup> The material was used to extract key events and dates that could be used to construct a comprehensive account of developments in the history of the filmed adventure series from the 1950s to the early 1970s. In this way, it was possible to map the field and begin to pinpoint gaps in the literature. The choice of mostly trade periodicals can suggest a narrowing of focus, but this was because it was important to try to understand the differing contemporary attitudes to filming a programme for television on location or on a soundstage compared to recording a programme within a television studio using electronic cameras. The result, for example, was that it was possible to find an early instance of a published interview with a television director to make a comparison between working on film to working in the electronic studio and begin to examine attitudes to the telefilm by other contemporary practitioners.<sup>46</sup> This allowed the thesis to integrate the main theoretical debates within the academic

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<sup>45</sup> The original source material is appropriately referenced in the thesis and/or contained in the bibliography.

<sup>46</sup> The director was Ted Kotcheff. See pp. 49-50.

literature, for example, the issue of flow or the ephemeral nature of television, with a close historical analysis.

This research method not only offered an account of events that could be evidenced, but offered the possibility of an insight into historical processes between the ITV broadcasting companies, and how this impinged on the ‘creativity’ of the individuals employed by them. For example, reading contemporary interviews with practitioners enabled an understanding of the motivations of key individuals like Monty Berman and Julian Wintle as they were employed to develop the adventure series in the 1960s. To be able to better appreciate the attitudes to television at the time by practitioners and/or commentators helped to contextualise wider theoretical debates surrounding television by Raymond Williams, John Ellis, Jane Feuer and others that were not formulated to deal specifically with the British adventure series.

Nevertheless, journalistic discourse from periodicals can raise problems about the validity of the information that has been published. Therefore, care had to be taken not only to consult consumer and trade publications when building an understanding of events, but a wider range of sources to counter-balance the possibility of bias or opinion expressed by commentators of the period. Consequently, official publications by the ITV television regulator, the Independent Television Authority (ITA), and other government papers such as *The Pilkington Report* (1962) and *The Annan Report* (1977) were consulted. These papers could be relied on as a reliable source, although questions of interpretation continued to be valid. Other document sources were company records from ITV television companies, insofar as they existed, which were inspected to ensure further methodological integrity, and as a check on the claims made by journalists or officialdom.

Another key problem of reliability, one that James Chapman has remarked on, became apparent while researching the thesis.<sup>47</sup> Care had to be taken to check some of the facts cited in fan-based books.<sup>48</sup> The telefilm adventure series of the 1960s and, to a lesser degree, the shot-on-film television series produced by Euston Films in the 1970s, such as *The Sweeney*, have become subjects of celebration by the ‘avid viewer’ or fan. Information about *The Avengers* and *The Prisoner* could be found in periodicals such as *Starburst*, but this clearly functioned as a fan magazine. The information from fan-based books and periodicals can be useful, but there are dangers relying on previous work that is lacking in empirical studies and referencing, and is primarily a highly subjective celebration of a particular series that functions as nostalgia.

To counter the problem of reliability and, more crucially, interpretation of the programmes that have been chosen, it was necessary to find other sources of information, in addition to the ones already mentioned. A visit to the Written Archive Centre (WAC) of the BBC, based at Caversham Park, meant it was possible to uncover information that was able to shed light on a few of the claims and assumptions made about *The Avengers*, an ITV show. Fortunately, the show had been discussed by *The Critics*, a BBC Radio show in 1963, and it was possible to understand, using some of the archive material, how attitudes to the show had been constructed. This provided insight into how the action-adventure text existed as a

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<sup>47</sup> James Chapman, ‘*The Avengers*: Television and Popular Culture during the High Sixties’, in Anthony Aldgate, James Chapman and Arthur Marwick (eds), *Windows on the Sixties: Exploring Key Texts of Media and Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 37-69 (p. 65). Chapman refers to Toby Miller and an encounter with an *Avengers* fan.

<sup>48</sup> For example, books such as Dave Rogers, *The Ultimate Avengers* (London: Boxtree, 1995) and by the same author, *The Prisoner and Danger Man* (London: Boxtree, 1989).

production strategy to create ‘culturally valuable’ television that relied on the written word rather than visual style, and a tension between an older form of realism and a modern Pop Art, which can be used to articulate wider cultural thematic discussions both inside and outside television.

Other document archives were consulted to check the information about Thames Television and its film-making subsidiary, Euston Films. Once again, most discourse about Euston Films seemed to be by fans about *The Sweeney*, a gritty crime series of the 1970s, in semi-professional magazines such as *Primetime*. The problem of finding information on the formative period of Euston Films – the period the thesis wished to address in order to draw a possible link between it and the 1960s telefilm series - meant that two more archives were consulted at the British Film Institute. These contain material from Thames Television and the programme *Hazell* (1977-78) produced by Thames. Documents from Thames Television are extremely difficult to find, and this is probably a consequence of the demise of the regional ITV companies after the Broadcasting Act (1990), leading to the loss of many of the files. There is anecdotal evidence that it was possible in the 1990s to rescue valuable material from the rubbish skip – the picture used at the front of the thesis is one such example and was kindly provided to me by a lighting engineer, who has an amateur interest in the history of ITV.<sup>49</sup>

As a consequence, both archives at the BFI are incomplete and consist of a miscellany of documents that, in the case of the Thames Television archive, has not been catalogued. However, it was able to yield much valuable information on the

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<sup>49</sup> Roddy Buxton.

historical context to the formation of Euston Films and a few surviving documents offered insight into how management, men such as Jeremy Isaacs, reacted to the possibility of shooting drama on film. The archive for Thames Television was a key resource for information about the use of 16mm film cameras and attitudes to using film when because of employment demarcation rules it was not possible to deploy 16mm film for television fiction without special arrangement between the television trade union, Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), and the ITV companies. The second archive for the Thames Television programme, *Hazell*, included more information that was not published or had been heavily edited when it had been published in one of the very few books examining the process of producing a television programme at the time.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, archive research can only represent a partial insight into events within an institution. In order to better understand the context of production operations and decisions, it was necessary to interview several retired individuals who had been employed by Thames Television and Euston Films. Communications were in the form of e-mails, telephone calls and, if they could be arranged, a face-to-face interview in London. The key interviewees included Jim Goddard, a director for *Callan*, *Special Branch*, and *Hazell*; Muir Sutherland, the Head of Thames Television International; Trevor Preston, a writer on *The Protectors*, *Special Branch* and *Hazell*; Ted Childs, the producer of *Special Branch*.<sup>51</sup> Together they were able to provide much anecdotal material that could be used to re-think the industrial contexts of

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<sup>50</sup> See Manuel Alvarado and Edward Buscombe, *Hazell* (London: British Film Institute, 1978) and Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made For Television: Euston Films Limited* (London: British Film Institute in association with Thames Television International, 1985). Unfortunately, Manuel Alvarado died a few months before the commencement of this thesis.

<sup>51</sup> The author has computer video files of the interviews.

production in British television in the 1970s and the use of film for television. Of course, the unreliability of anecdotal information was a concern, and the thesis takes care not to be dependent on it, but verify the opinions and memories that have no doubt dimmed over thirty years, using published and unpublished sources. Overall, several methods of research have been grafted onto each other to diminish reliability problems caused by the use of journalistic discourse, fan-based books and interview material.



## Structure of the Chapters

Chapter one raises some key problems of analysis of television that are specific to it as a medium. Rather than a form of fixed meanings within the text, a vision of semiotic research modelled on empiricism as has happened often within the history of Film Studies, it acknowledges that meaning can only come from active engagement with the television series in which producers are not autonomously driven, but responsive to institutions and its specific address to audiences. The thesis explores the possibility of the formation of the production of a variety of ‘culturally valuable’ texts within the highly regulated form of the television adventure series, which were a contribution and response to the televisual ‘flow’ of the period.

To interrogate more fully the industrialisation of television and its processes, chapter one asks questions about television flow, first proposed by Raymond Williams in 1974.<sup>52</sup> It establishes that new forms of popular programming conceived as mass entertainment did not negate the possibility of appealing to a domestic *and* active audience rather than one that, because of domestic pressures, was distracted. To conceive of cultural power negatively, especially with regard to popular programming on television, can refute the need to develop a positive analysis of cultural value in a medium that is a form of mass-communication. However, through an active reading of the richer texts, this thesis can demonstrate how the 1960s and 1970s television adventure series developed a growingly sophisticated narrative and visual style.

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<sup>52</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1974), pp. 78-118.

The argument is that television's function in Britain was to change after the launch of ITV in 1955, although care has been taken not to claim that competition between the BBC and ITV was simply between a paternalistic broadcaster and a 'vulgar' commercial channel in search of ratings. The beginning of ITV marks, in many ways, the starting point of the thesis. After that date, the increased commodification of the popular taste of the audience reflected the increased commercial imperatives of television production. However, the use of a public service ethos within British television meant that the need to compete for audiences and market share was predicated on a need to offer choice to an audience perceived both as citizens and consumers. Consequently, the drive for profit was never entirely at the core of British commercial broadcasting.

Chapter two aims to demonstrate that the 'catholic tastes' of the television audience, which had been identified by the late 1950s, meant that it was possible for the creation of modalities of meanings and generic patterns of thought between 'popular' and 'serious' forms; between 'watchability' and 'realism'. At the same time, the thesis acknowledges that these values, rather than simply interacting, could remain contradictory and existed, at other times, side-by-side. There is a discussion in chapter two of how the 'old' values of service within a system of public broadcasting were not eliminated but were placed into contradiction with other values. The new values of commodification would create a tension between notions of quality and entertainment that would continue to affect the modes of the British adventure series as it became less of a stable object of analysis.

An account of Sydney Newman and Lew Grade seeks to demonstrate that the industrialisation of television did not always produce a conflict or contradiction between the 'free' individual creating a programme of cultural or artistic significance

and the institution with its characteristic mode of industrial production, including the entertainment series.

Chapter two also explains how one important factor in the use of film on television was the consequence of choosing to retain the pre-war 405 line technological standard for British television that would mean that film became a method of programme construction if programmes were exported. The thesis argues that television's early function as a live relay device was put into contradiction very rapidly with the institution of ITV as a corporate provider of mass entertainment. It finds evidence of this in the way that television was to create new television forms that consisted of building a televisual flow for a domestic audience as well as developing programmes that, to a degree, created audience engagement for a British *and* transatlantic audience.

Such economic possibilities were used to create the telefilm market in the late 1950s and early 1960s after the demise of the 'B' and medium budget movie.<sup>53</sup> The telefilm had been an American invention, but in Britain the form was adapted to indigenous interests to become the detective adventure series, *Colonel March of Scotland Yard* (1955), or swashbuckling *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955-59) and later became the 'modern' adventure series, in shows such as *The Invisible Man* (1958-59) and *Danger Man* (1960-66), which incorporated notions of the detective, swashbuckling types of action, and notions of the 'defence of the realm'. These were

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<sup>53</sup> As has already been pointed out, the term 'telefilm' is used within the thesis to describe a fictional popular drama series shot on film in the 1950s and 1960s whose origins, in the thesis, can be traced mostly to the use of 'B' movie conventions for television. The term, telefilm, changed meaning by the time of the made-for-TV filmed series of the 1970s. Consequently, I do not apply the term to the shot-on-film series made by Euston Films. The equivalent for the telefilm, shot on videotape, took a number of names in the 1960s, but one was the vidshow.

to become early examples of the quickly-filmed adventure series of the 1960s that constituted a profitable commodity. More importantly, the narrative of these new types of shows no longer appealed, as had the earliest adventure shows, to a juvenile audience, but could offer, within limits, a complexity and ambiguity requiring a cultural capital on behalf of its audience. The production of the telefilm series would, according to Catherine Johnson, 'create aesthetically valuable "public service" television that [would] also appeal to a wide (and international) audience'.<sup>54</sup> This thesis argues that the use of film and the new production methods that incorporated the professional values of technicians from the film industry meant that one distinctive new modality associated with new cultural and economic values became the action-adventure series on television.

Chapter three carefully refutes that television's teleology has only been an issue of technological development, but has been culturally determined – specifically, the use of film for television since the mid to late 1950s. While this thesis discusses technology, looking at technological change, it is not a work about technology as such. However, the thesis refers to key developments to do with using film for television. By the 1960s, the working together side by side of a cinematic praxis with television - the use of film - within the adventure series had led to a degree of interaction. But it was the growing use of 16mm film at the beginning of the 1970s that would lead to the creation of Euston Films and its first series, *Special Branch*, between a fictional representation of the 'real' and changes to the expectation of how the adventure genre would deliver action. By the early 1970s, television that had been

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<sup>54</sup> Catherine Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), p. 148.

shot on film was becoming much more self-defining than had been possible in the 1960s telefilm market, and had created formal and cultural categories that had become specific to it.

The desire for greater objectivity and a realism that could accurately depict contemporary Britain offers the opportunity of examining a final adventure programme that was mostly shot electronically inside the television studio rather than on film and on location. *Hazell* was an adventure series made in the mid 1970s that tried to look very different from *The Sweeney*, a crime series produced by Euston Films and shot on 16mm film. Unpublished interviews with Jeremy Isaacs and Verity Lambert, Director of Programmes and Head of Drama at Thames Television respectively, reveal that the company wanted a new type of adventure that would be a break from the filmed adventure series with its emphasis on physical action. A comparative analysis between *Hazell* and the earlier shot-on-film adventure series from Euston Films demonstrates how a production in the studio at this period sought to find a greater realism, but whose stylistics, at least, in the planning stage, owed more to a filmic tradition from Hollywood rather than a mode belonging to the studio that continued to use a naturalistic form of drama.

In chapter four programmes principally from ABC-TV and ATV and ITC are used to provide meaning and value to the analysis of some aspects of British television.<sup>55</sup> Other programmes from Thames Television and its film subsidiary,

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<sup>55</sup> To avoid confusion between Associated British Corporation Television (ABC-TV) and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), the American commercial broadcasting television network, the thesis will use ABC-TV when referring to the British company and ABC when referring to the American company. Occasionally, to further specify which is which, the American company will be referred to as ABC (US). ABC-TV was owned by the Associated British Corporation, which also owned the ABC cinema circuit and film production studios at Elstree in Hertfordshire.

Euston Films, are explored in chapter five to further complicate a few of the orthodoxies that have accumulated around an understanding of UK television and the effect of using film on production aesthetics.

At the same time, any claim for uniqueness for some of the shows that are examined in chapters four and five must be tested. The account of *The Avengers* in chapter four finds that, far from being unique or achieving a ‘special event’ status, it continued to use many diachronic links to past shows and an adherence to a realistic style. Even its construction of a discourse about modernity was one that had been articulated a decade earlier and already seen in *Danger Man*. Similarly, a synchronic analysis can seek to demonstrate the demarcation and regulation of forms and modes within television’s material production. Crucially, this thesis asks: what, once they were shot on film, did these ‘exceptional’ programmes offer for the institutions and producers that originally created them? As a consequence, the thesis is often interested in transformative events when the decision was taken to film a series. *The Avengers* and *Special Branch* are two of the shows that have been selected to help in this part of the analysis of the development of possible modes in television and the problems of regarding them as ‘special event’ television.

This thesis will go some way to demonstrating that visual style in filmed drama was not resisted institutionally by a British television labouring under a public service ethic, but was a history of negotiation between notions of public service and commercial television. This makes it possible to understand the appeal of programmes in both aesthetic and institutional/economic terms. The final two chapters demonstrate that the adventure text could, within culturally constructed conventions of service, at times conflict with commercial and economic imperatives. During the 1960s and 1970s, it was marked by its particular uses made visible by the

fluid boundaries of the adventure series that combined the original sensational spy thriller with other discourses, among others, about modernity and consumerism.

## **1. Filmed Television: Form and Mode**

### **Introduction:**

This chapter determines that television's phenomenology cannot be reduced to a system of semiotic signs or a set of generic conventions. Rather it finds that television's complexity could rely on its cultural and institutional conditions of production and, consequently, resists a single form of categorisation. An approach that seeks to be extra-textual acknowledges the difficulty of categorisation and the search for formal unity that, unlike television, is often found within the commercial cinema film.

The chapter explores how the organisation of repetition as well as difference, one of the key characteristics of genre, was used by British television in general and ITV in particular. It explains how the recording properties of film replaced the ephemeral nature of early television, which was either live or used (wipeable) videotape, and one result was to allow the continued use of genre as a marker of consistency that would continue to attract audience loyalty. It further suggests that the resistance and contribution to flow by programme-makers led to the creation of programmes which were 'culturally valuable'. The chapter ends by exploring in more detail the producer-text-audience relationship in order to gain a clearer insight into how television texts could work when they were shot as a telefilm.

The issue of quality and value in regards to television is important because an older hegemony of the public service remit in British television was first challenged, and then modified, by a desire for a commercial form of television. However, this chapter makes it clear that the arrival of commercial television in 1955 did not negate the possibility of public service in television. Instead, it was able to create



specificities within the adventure series. As we will see this started a discourse of quality in a popular television text against the idea that television flow totalises its function and can constrain the complexity of a single programme as well as address its audience only as a homogeneous mass.

### **Television Adventure: Boundaries of Text and Genre**

An examination of television's ability to create a taxonomy encompassing some of the main strands of the adventure genre begins by establishing the original parameters of the genre before dealing with questions of institutional discourses and practices specific to television. Adventure films at the cinema originally tended to be where action and visual spectacle were foregrounded and, in Britain, primarily appeared within the swashbuckler, the sensational spy thriller and the Empire film. What made the adventure genre relevant to Britain was a reliance on ideological and cultural concerns that centred on the British Empire and the values and mythologies about England and the non Anglo-Saxon countries that it had created. The historical antecedents of the adventure film can be found in a tradition of popular nineteenth century fiction stretching back to the 'Boy's Own' tradition. Tales of heroism and derring-do in the cinema drew on popular literature by Edgar Wallace and John Buchan and were later adapted by directors such as Alfred Hitchcock in the 1930s. The twentieth century's mass mediums of the radio and cinema represented the stirring mythologies of Empire and it was the cinema that narrativised threats to British hegemony to create some of the most celebrated pre-war adventure films, for example, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, directed by Hitchcock in 1935.

However, the adventure film, because of its reliance on tropes of British imperialism, would experience a decline in popularity from the 1960s. For James

Chapman, there was 'to be one last, glorious flowering of the old-fashioned imperial adventure film [*North West Frontier*] before the genre became a relic of the past.'<sup>56</sup> Chapman has identified how the patriotic hero in one of these sub-genres, the sensational spy thriller, would metamorphose into the cycle of successful James Bond films, while maintaining the convention of a virtuous hero defeating an alien and non Anglo-Saxon villain in the style of the 'Bulldog Drummond' novels and the works by John Buchan.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, because of the declining ideology of imperialism caused by de-colonisation, the Bond films would not only present a narrative that, thematically, continued to be based on the notion of the 'defence of the realm' but was also increasingly brought up-to-date by addressing contemporary themes, especially the representation of conspicuous consumption evident in the 'affluent society' of the 1960s. The 1960s fascination for the spy was partly inspired by the success of the Bond films and many of the mythologies associated with the spy can also be found in adventure series produced for British television by the Incorporated Television Company (ITC) in the 1960s, especially *Danger Man* (1960-66) and *The Saint* (1962-69) before the demise of the ITC adventure series in 1972-74.<sup>58</sup> The first of these shows, *Danger Man*, was to be less rooted in the social and political context of the 1950s but, as this thesis argues, included a central concern of television itself during the 1960s: the representation of 'modernity'.

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<sup>56</sup> *North West Frontier*, directed by J. Lee Thompson, 1959. See James Chapman, 'Action, Spectacle and the Boy's Own Tradition in British Cinema', in Robert Murphy (ed) *The British Cinema Book* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), pp. 217-225 (p. 219).

<sup>57</sup> James Chapman, *Licence to Thrill: a Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 22-48.

<sup>58</sup> ITC was Associated Television's (ATV) subsidiary that became Britain's biggest exporter of programmes. ITC was originally the Incorporated Television Programme Company (ITPC) set up in 1954 to bid for an ITV franchise.

This modernity appears, for example, when conspicuous consumption within the narrative of the 1960s television adventure series saw the replacement of the amateur spy, who, hitherto, had been normally a habitué of an exclusive male clubland, by the professional, middle-class technician.<sup>59</sup> Again, Chapman has written extensively about the transformation of the spy in the 1960s. To take one example, Emma Peel in Associated British Corporation Television's (ABC-TV) *The Avengers* (1961-69) can be understood to be the updating of the older type of protagonist by associating modernity with an emancipated, jet-age young woman.<sup>60</sup> A contemporary document of the time explained that 'The new *Avengers* formula is set against the background of...atom stations, bio-chemical plants and modern industry on the one hand to fox-hunting, stately homes and Old Englishe Inne on the other'.<sup>61</sup> By the fifth series, Emma Peel's persona had altered somewhat and she was described as a 'hippy mod' in a 'new series so slick you could almost see the colour.'<sup>62</sup> Here, modern did not simply mean the 'new', but again was about individual consumption and the pleasures it could evoke.

A second main narrative tradition within the adventure thriller which came to work side-by-side with the first would be the 'existential thrillers which play on a

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<sup>59</sup> See David Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 76-93.

<sup>60</sup> Chapman has been able to trace the lineage for Emma Peel back to the spirited heroines of Hitchcock's British films played by Margaret Lockwood (*The Lady Vanishes*) and Madeline Carroll (*The 39 Steps*). See Chapman, *Saints and Avengers*, p. 76.

<sup>61</sup> Marie Donaldson, 'A History of *The Avengers*: With a Guide to the Characters of John Steed and Emma Peel', undated but prepared for the fourth season in the autumn of 1965. (Various cuttings on microfiche at the British Film Institute).

<sup>62</sup> Stanley Reynolds, 'Weekend Television', *The Guardian*, 16 January 1967, unpaginated. (From various cuttings on microfiche at the British Film Institute).

dialectic of good and evil over-determined by moral dilemmas'.<sup>63</sup> In the same year that *The Protectors* (1972-74) and its immediate predecessor *The Persuaders* (1971-72) were to repeat the conventions of the sensational spy thriller, Euston Films, the new subsidiary of Thames Television, would use its inheritance from *Armchair Theatre* (1956-74) to produce a new kind of adventure series, *Special Branch* (1973-74).<sup>64</sup> Some of its episodes, but by no means all, are within the second tradition whose antecedents existed earlier in literature by Graham Greene and John Le Carré. It was Le Carré who had published one of the bestsellers of the 1960s, *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*, that subsequently became a film in 1965. Here the approach is more critical of authority and doubt is cast on whether agents are fighting to protect something valuable or creating false barriers between 'us' and 'them'. This type of narrative is close to the political thriller. Although both variants of the adventure thriller continued to share an ideology of patriotism and duty, it was the action adventure variant, and its deployment of spectacle and visual style using the medium of film for television, which the thesis is mainly concerned with.

More generally, the study of genre on television can differ in many ways from the cinema. Jane Feuer has argued that as Genre Studies has moved from film to television, the study of genre must rely on a number of different critical levels. She has formulated a methodology that includes a *ritual approach* that sees genre as an exchange between industry and audience, an exchange through which a culture speaks to itself and can maintain and rejuvenate the social order. She also has formulated an *ideological approach* that accounts for how genres can structure dominant ideologies

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<sup>63</sup> Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>64</sup> *Armchair Theatre* ran from 1956-74. It was a television drama anthology series on ITV.

into their conventions and serve to reproduce the dominant ideology of the capitalist system.<sup>65</sup> This is a valuable approach which will be used here to gain an understanding of the specificity of film on television within the production of the adventure series. By asking how the programmes were understood by institutions, programme-makers and audiences, the text can be analysed as an industrial form of aesthetic practice.

Consequently, the analysis of genre can go beyond the limits of the text and examine a number of 'extra-textual' areas including television's industrialising process and other cultural phenomena. A critical discussion of discourse and how these texts were first viewed and understood will serve two purposes: firstly, to pay careful attention to the historical conditions which formulated and reformulated the adventure series on television and how it was understood by producers and the audience. Secondly, to examine what was meant by 'creativity' at a time when television was both technologically and institutionally constrained.

As this chapter will show, this approach is initially predicated on television's 'phenomenology [as] one of flow, banality, distraction and transience, its semiotics complex, fragmentary and heterogeneous. The limits of the text "proper" and its formal unity – apt to be broken at any moment by an ad or a turn of the dial...' <sup>66</sup> Within this 'flow', texts do not interact on their own, but are brought together by cultural practices. A television text can be formed by an often complex set of processes involving industrial and audience practices. Moreover, if television is

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<sup>65</sup> Jane Feuer, 'Genre Study and Television', in Robert C. Allen (ed.) *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 113-133 (p. 119).

<sup>66</sup> Nick Browne, 'The Political Economy of the Television (Super) Text', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol.9, no.3, Summer 1984, pp. 174-182 (p. 176).

culturally specific and temporally limited, as we will see, cultural production can be organised around principles other than generic ones. The history of the television adventure genre demonstrates the fluidity of the form which changed frequently over time although the programmes looked at will mostly fall within the conventions of the action-adventure series which incorporate the spy and super-sleuth detective, but which are nevertheless capable of creating hybrids with, for example, the crime genre and its greater attention to 'realism'. For Chapman, the adventure series is a label that is 'flexible enough to include the slightly different generic regimes which regulate the secret agent, crime-fighter and private-eye narratives' that incorporate action and suspense.<sup>67</sup>

Television in the period under observation did not use genre to the same extent as the cinema because it had a property of 'flow' that blended programmes together to form an overall evening's worth of programming. Many critics, such as Raymond Williams and John Ellis, both of whom are considered in this chapter, have argued that the unit of coherence for television is at a level larger than the programme and different from the genre, although the thesis examines what contribution a genre, with its fixed codes of narrative and visual style, could make to 'flow'. Crucially, it will demonstrate how the recording of a programme on film gave it a fixity and a non-ephemeral quality that much of television, which was originally live or recorded later on videotape but continued to use the tropes of liveness, lacked. In this way, the use of genre on film continued to guarantee meanings and pleasures for audiences, even if it became increasingly an unstable marker of expectation and knowledge by the mid

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<sup>67</sup> James Chapman, *Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 13.

1960s. Lacking the more stable character of genre, the television adventure series was tied as much to the demarcation and regulation of forms and modes within material processes of television production as to the distinguishing of types of texts and their aesthetic delineation.

One of the reasons for this increasing instability was that the boundaries between the text of the adventure genre and television's cultural or industrial practices were shifting to the creation of a heterogeneous televisual 'space' that contributed to *and* resisted the ability of television flow to strip a programme of its distinctive characteristics. Flow did not simply exist because of domestic scheduling but also became a sense of programming both within and outside British television. Initially, the use of US telefilms in the 1950s would have disrupted the sense of flow because the representation of action and its corollary space would have been different when much of British television remained shot inside the studio. In this way, the thesis acknowledges and analyses some of the complications of flow as something other than that which distracted the audience. However, it has to be acknowledged that television sought value not only from difference, but because the repetition of various forms was to play an important part in allowing the formulation of the television series as a stable object and set of signifiers.

If British telefilms such as *Danger Man* were quick to repeat some of the conventions of the American telefilm imports of the mid to late 1950s, some were also able to create generic hybrids including the use of intertextuality by the 1960s; for example, as I hope to show, the allusion to a John Betjeman documentary about the end of the Age of Steam in an episode of *The Avengers* and a popular educational

series in *The Prisoner*.<sup>68</sup> Television can be thought of as the quintessential postmodern medium that relies on recombination, re-functioning and pastiche. John Caughie has remarked that ‘In television studies, there seems to be a creeping sense that television is so thoroughly a technology of postmodernity – perhaps even the defining technology which makes the decisive break with the “modern age” and reshapes everyday life as postmodern – that all its forms must be *ipso facto* postmodernist.’<sup>69</sup> For Caughie, the particularity of television drama has been hard to identify, and, for this reason, he has sought to reclaim a modernist tradition for British drama of the 1960s rather than one that relies on display and spectacle that, it can be argued, represents postmodernist tropes.<sup>70</sup>

One solution to the problem of finding particularity in television has been to separate particular programmes from the televisual flow. An argument presented in this thesis is that particular British programmes, if they were shot on film, could be more easily packaged as a fixed entity that would have a cultural and production ‘quality’ unlike ‘everyday’ television. Rather than rejecting difference within a critical examination of television, originality and creativity can be re-discovered in the text. This approach will ultimately lead to case studies of particular programmes within the adventure series that can be used to demonstrate some of the theoretical problems in television (where does a television text begin and end?). This type of scholarship is intended to analyse programmes for their distinctive or unique qualities

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<sup>68</sup> The suggestion is that Speedlearn, a technique used in *The Prisoner* episode, *The General* (1967), was a parodic allusion to the popularity of such educational shows as the *Alan Taylor* lectures (1957-1961) and *Revolution* (1967) on ITV at the time.

<sup>69</sup> John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 163.

<sup>70</sup> Caughie, *Television Drama*.



as well as to raise questions about programme categorisation and their generic characteristics.

One complication to analysing the adventure text is that there are quite radical differences even between episodes in a single series. A glaring example would be the first and final episode of *The Prisoner*. The first episode follows the narrative conventions of a spy thriller and the last is a rupture with past practices. There are other discrepant examples: episodes such as *View from the Villa* (1960) and *The Ubiquitous Mr Lovegrove* (1965) in *Danger Man*. If there is a difficulty in making general statements about a single series, the generic verisimilitude between the producer, text and viewer can be shown not to have referred to a static set of expectations across a series. Instead, there was something which could change radically in a short space of time, not only as newer examples of the genre emerged within the televisual flow, but as individual players affected the production process. Consequently, because ‘...the property of “flow” blends one program unit into another...’ Feuer identifies how television genres appear have a tendency to recombine across genre lines.<sup>71</sup> For example, one of the earliest examples of the adventure show, *The Invisible Man* (1958-59), would combine science-fiction elements with a Boy’s Own adventure. In its final episode, *The Big Plot*, the radioactive element uranium and atomic bombs are combined with older themes about non Anglo-Saxon threats to England amid the *modus operandi* of the detective collecting clues that provided a forerunner to *The Avengers*.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Jane Feuer, ‘Genre Study and Television’, in Robert C. Allen (ed.) *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 113-133 (p. 131).

<sup>72</sup> *The Invisible Man*, ‘The Big Plot’, originally transmitted, 5 July 1959.

Moreover, the service ethic on British TV would mean that the text could operate differently from genre, functioning primarily as a way in which programmes could be distinguished from each other, rather than a set of shared conventions and expectations in order to regulate difference. To overcome this and other problems of analysis, the thesis makes possible the exploration of generic similarities and the transposition of certain familiar elements in several programmes as well as finding their differences within broader narrative modes and televisual forms.

### **Mode and the Expanded Function of Television**

Although both the institutions of cinema and television use the medium of moving images, there is a difference in their perceived quality as well as questions about their equality; the cinema has often been thought to be more aesthetically valuable by practitioners. For example, Ted Kotcheff, a Canadian, who had been working in British television as a director for ABC-TV with Sydney Newman on *Armchair Theatre* from 1958 to 1960, was frustrated by the technical difficulties of working in TV and aspired to direct for the cinema:

...you have no absolute control of [television's] picture quality. Your lighting effects which you took great trouble over, may go out of the window once the show is transmitted, because someone has their brilliance up too high, or contrast down too low...So you're working in a pictorial medium where you run the risk of losing 50 percent of your picture quality!...adding up all the points, you find that ultimately working in TV is like sculpting in snow, it's all gone in the morning sun and everyone's forgotten it was ever there. This is why every TV director wants to get out into films.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Vincent Porter and Chris Wicking, 'The Making of Life at the Top', *Film and Television Technician*, vol.31, no.249, December 1965, pp. 230-232 (p. 230).

It is not within the scope of this thesis to make a comparative analysis between images at the cinema and on television but an aesthetic approach to some of the television programmes being examined is deployed in this thesis, especially the idea of television authorship within ‘unique’ shows. However, underlying any debate about television, the text, as a concept and as a practice, will be shown to be different from the discrete unity of film at the cinema during the same period. Kotcheff’s frustration with television, in his case a frustration with its ephemeral nature, serves to remind us that the methods of analysis applied to the cinema text cannot be simply transposed to the use of film on television.

The critical discourse constructed around the early function of television was concerned with television as an aesthetic medium, but which aesthetic was ‘natural’ to television? In 1970, Joan Bakewell was to comment that, ‘...a whole theology was erected to justify television’s existence as an autonomous art in terms of its liveness’.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, it should be remembered that such debates were limited to a small group of people.<sup>75</sup> If such debates were raised it was television’s artistic and ontological specificity, its relations to other media, particularly cinema, and its proper programme forms, that were the core issues that formed the debate.

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<sup>74</sup> Joan Bakewell and Nicholas Garnham, *The New Priesthood: British Television Today* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>75</sup> Philip Purser, the television critic for the *News Chronicle* in 1959, was one such person. My own research has revealed that those who worked inside ABC Television, one of the ‘Big Four’ ITV companies in the 1960s, were not conscious of any such debates; in fact, such questions produced genuine confusion on the part of those being questioned. It has been commented by the people interviewed by the author that Granada Television, which would produce executives such as Jeremy Isaacs, was one ITV company that was more like the BBC. The adduction is that work cultures and occupational ideologies were important factors in how specific programmes and genres were conceived at the time combined with, as Jason Jacobs argues ‘a macro-overview of broadcasting history’ in *Intimate Screen*, 2000, p.10.

One of the characteristics to have defined the specificity of television's aesthetic was its problematic relationship to its own past. Until 1947, none of the programmes shown on television could be recorded.<sup>76</sup> From that date, telerecording, (Kinescope in America), the ability to record an electronic television signal using film scanners onto celluloid, became possible.<sup>77</sup> This was a remarkably elaborate method that used a specially adapted large, high grade flat television screen and a film camera aimed at the screen shooting at a frame rate synchronised with the television frame rate:

...the [film] camera has to photograph both the odd- and the even-line scan on one frame of the film. To do this without showing the lines a mirror drum arrangement is used, and the film is run steadily through the camera (which has no shutter)...The recording is not made by a camera on the set but from a picture of the scene produced on a monitoring set with a large cathode ray tube. An extra deflection coil is wound on the neck of the tube, which causes the electron beam to wobble up and down at a high frequency and so spread the light spot over the whole of the scanning-line space.<sup>78</sup>

The image, as can be imagined, was poor and the process expensive.

Telerecording was also seen as a tool for the purpose of repeats and possible sales to overseas markets but the expense and difficulty of using telerecording meant it did not seriously challenge the belief that television was essentially a live medium. The large centralised complexes such as BBC Television Centre, completed in 1960, were products of the era of live television in which television drama consisted of the

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<sup>76</sup> John Caughie, 'Before the Golden Age: Early Television Drama', in John Corner (ed.), *Popular Television in Britain* (London: British Film Institute, 1991), pp. 22-41 (p. 24).

<sup>77</sup> Maurice Gorham, *Television: Medium of the Future* (London: Percival Marshall, 1949), p. 106.

<sup>78</sup> T.J. Morgan, *The True Book about Television and Radio* (London: Frederick Muller, 1955, revised edition, 1961), p. 88.

continuous performance shot in 'real-time' inside a studio.<sup>79</sup> The alternative of recording on videotape was perfected in 1958 after a long series of experiments by the American electronics corporation Ampex, but taping programmes did not become routine until after the early 1960s.<sup>80</sup> Many programmes throughout this period were wiped either to reuse the tape because of the high costs of early tape, or to save storage space, a situation that persisted until the 1980s.<sup>81</sup>

It can be argued that the lack of recorded drama programmes that could be stored and later reviewed, and improved on, or re-interpreted, essentialised television into a perpetual present during the 1950s, reinforcing its earlier relay mode. The problems of recording and an adherence to the simple relay function of television meant that 'The vast majority of the single plays and serials produced by the BBC until the 1960s were adaptations, coming to the viewer with a prior seal of approval from the West End theatre...Plays written specifically for television were the exception rather than the rule...'<sup>82</sup> John Caughie argues that until 1952, when Michael Barry became Head of Television Drama, succeeding Val Gielgud, television

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<sup>79</sup> BBC Television Centre, with its seven major studios and some smaller ones allowed the production of 3,000 hours of television programme material every year. See Sir Gerald Beadle, *Television in Britain: an Address before a Private Audience in New York on 26 January 1960* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1960), p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> T. J. Morgan, *The True Book about Television and Radio*, p. 90.

The BBC introduced a system of video recording of their own called VERA, which stood for Vision Electronic Recording Apparatus. The ITA companies used the Ampex Videotape Recorder. After 1961, the BBC did eventually use the Ampex system.

<sup>81</sup> See D. J. Kimbley, 'Survival of Celluloid in the Age of Microelectronics', *Television: the Journal of the Royal Television Society*, September/October 1981, pp. 21-25 (p. 25). 'Consider the huge libraries of tape programme material that have accumulated and are still accumulating; they either have to be thrown out or stored or transferred to the latest technology. If they're going to be transferred, that is a tremendous task. It means replacing all the two-inch tapes with new one-inch tape. Even if it were transferred to film it would be a tremendous task but it would then at least become a standard which could be used for ever.'

<sup>82</sup> John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 38.

within the BBC monopoly had been the television equivalent of a novel or stage play.<sup>83</sup>

According to Charles Barr, by the time the BBC television service had resumed after 1946, television was already no longer using a system of the continuous relay of images. Direct transmission remained the dominant mode, but it was possible to cut cleanly between studio cameras as an alternative to mix or fade out/fade-in. For Barr, this 'brings the fundamental syntax of television a bit closer to that of cinema.'<sup>84</sup> The organisation of space was becoming closer to mainstream cinema and the multi-camera studio drama can be understood as a basic version of the Hollywood continuity system. For example, the cutting between cameras would mean that if it was organised using an axis of action (the 180 degree rule) a continuity style of editing was possible. On the other hand, the images shot live by television cameras may have looked superficially like an edited film sequence, but they were a record of real time continuity and not, as in the case of film, the construction of an apparent continuity. At the same time, the electronic cameras of the television studio, because of their bulk, were unable to move much. Instead movement by the actors would be observed by 'correctly' positioned cameras. One advantage of this was that instead of using a single film camera and the time-consuming business of organising and shooting separate set-ups, multi-camera studio television could be shot continuously.

This then was a fundamental difference between shooting on film and broadcasting live within the electronic studio. However, the use of film continued to

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<sup>83</sup> Caughie, *Television Drama*, p. 38.

<sup>84</sup> Charles Barr, 'They Think It's All Over: The Dramatic Legacy of Live Television' in John Hill and Martin McLoone (eds), *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations between Film and Television* (Luton: John Libbey Media, 1996), p. 58.

offer the possibility of allowing for the manipulation of time across cuts and avoid the strict naturalistic/theatrical continuities of space and time. Within the economy of classic narrative cinema, redundancy had been eliminated from the narrative as much as possible in order that 'space and time are almost invariably made vehicles for narrative causality'.<sup>85</sup> The adventure series as a telefilm continued to rely on a configuration of space and time that was reducible to causality as well as contribute to narrative resolution. At the same time, the shooting on film would be regarded as widening the scope of visual style and editing and the adventure series being looked at would be regarded as free from certain technical and institutional constraints of the electronic studio. For example, chapter three explains how the telefilm brought to the small screen a sense of the epic and 'the maximisation of spatial resources'.

Nevertheless, its mode was also organised by the consumption of television as a domestic medium and the watching of a scheduled series that stripped programmes of their individual characteristics. This is looked at in more detail in this chapter, to offer a more complex understanding of the adventure series as it incorporated a sense of intimacy as well as the ability to create spectacle. Within the sequencing of programmes or 'flow', it was possible for television programmes to rely on characteristics of the single text and its fixed generic expectations, as well as a mode that was suitable for a television series. The combination of image capacities designed for a domestic audience and the adjustment of generic setting, character and types of action is important to understanding how the original fixed meanings of the

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<sup>85</sup> David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 6.

genre, discussed by Chapman, changed later to its more fluid form that incorporated a variety of different styles.

It was Barry who established the Drama Script Section, with a Script Supervisor under his direct control whose brief was to find new writing. Within a year the Script Supervisor reported ‘very encouraging’ statistics, including that 12 out of 107 dramas transmitted over the past twelve months had been new works written specially for television which compared well with 1946 when nearly all the 76 plays had been established successes.<sup>86</sup> Barry also spent his entire first year’s budget - £250 - on commissioning new scripts by one man, a young short-story writer called Nigel Kneale.<sup>87</sup> Within a year Kneale had written the *Quatermass Experiment*, a six part science-fiction serial. The *Quatermass* science-fiction series, written by Kneale and directed by Rudolph Cartier in the mid-1950s, was a sensational success because it was different from so much else on television. It marked a moment of original, as distinct from pre-existing, drama in the early history of British television.

*Quatermass* was able to make use of telerecording to produce a hybrid dramatic form that combined the immediacy of the liveness of the studio with the *action* of filmed or recorded footage (filmed inserts) and signalled an expansion of the function of television.

The first serial, *The Quatermass Experiment*, was made in 1953; this was followed by *Quatermass II* in 1955, and finally *Quatermass and the Pit* in 1958-59. *Quatermass*, as a representation of the fantastic, was able to appeal to audiences in

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<sup>86</sup> Robin Wade, *Where the Difference Began* (BBC, Television Script Unit - internal document detailing history of the Drama Script Section, 1975), p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> The figure of £250 is from Andrew Pixley, *The Quatermass Collection*, DVD viewing notes (London: BBC Worldwide, 2005), p. 2. An incredible sum because according to the National Archives calculator, £250 is equivalent to £5700 today.



ways that the relay of West End theatre had failed to do. It signified how television was able to create a 'presence' rather than an 'absence' by expanding its function to include a form of dramatic entertainment borrowed from the cinema. Television was no longer following the logic of remaining a transmitting medium, but was becoming one that, like cinema before it, could produce images which might manipulate visual information using separate film camera set-ups. Nigel Kneale, the writer of *Quatermass*, explained that 'Film adds both physical freedom and atmosphere...all the technically difficult scenes, involving special effects which it would have been risky to tackle live, were filmed, giving the producer much greater control.'<sup>88</sup>

It was after the passing of the Television Act, 1954, and the prospect of ITV as a rival channel, that Cecil McGivern, the controller of BBC television programmes, argued that the new competition meant that the corporation should be producing many similar dramas. He wrote that '[Nigel Kneale]...gave us the serial, "*The Quatermass Experiment*". Had competitive television been in existence then, we would have killed it every Saturday night while that serial lasted. We are going to need many more "*Quatermass Experiment*" programmes and series...'<sup>89</sup>

One history, and probably the dominant discourse about early television, has been that it was, notwithstanding the success of *Quatermass*, institutionally constrained. It was felt by some at the time that the BBC was a culturally conservative organisation, which had a monopoly and little incentive to innovate, besides the wishes and desires of its own managing elites and their thoughts about who the audience was or what it wanted. Norman Collins, Controller of the BBC

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<sup>88</sup> Nigel Kneale, 'Not Quite so Intimate', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 28, no. 2, Spring 1959, pp.86-88 (p.87).

<sup>89</sup> Cecil McGivern, 'The Future: Script Section', memo, BBC, WAC T31/141/1, 10 November 1954.

Television Service from 1947, resigned because of what he perceived was the BBC's adherence to sound broadcasting and moved on to campaign for commercial television. On the subject of the BBC's monopoly Collins wrote 'It is unhealthy for the Corporation because it means that some members of the staff remain there, patiently and miserably working out their time, for the simple reason that they know only too well that their single, specialised talent is totally valueless and unsaleable outside'.<sup>90</sup> For many, including Kenneth Clark, the first Chairman of the Independent Television Authority (ITA), the lack of commercial competition was seen to be an obstacle and the reason why the BBC was failing to provide for its main audience. 'It was obvious that Commercial Television would produce a *cloaca maxima* of rubbish, but the television produced by the BBC was often extremely dismal...I realised that television was above all a popular medium and believed that commercial television might add some element of vital vulgarity which is not without its value.'<sup>91</sup> The breaking of the BBC monopoly became a crucial event in the encouragement of new forms to appear on television.

The first ITV region to broadcast was in the London area in September 1955 and ATV (Associated Television, that ran from 1955-82), jointly with Associated Rediffusion (1955-68), became the first of the Independent Television companies to go on air. It was Collins who had thought up the name 'Independent Television'; a term that had come up in informal chit-chat at the Liberal Reform Club. 'At a stroke it sweetened the image of the enterprise by removing it from the taint of blatant

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<sup>90</sup> Norman Collins quoted in Tinker, *The Television Barons*, p. 28. Collins wrote this for an article in the *Sunday Express* after he had resigned in 1950 from the BBC.

<sup>91</sup> Kenneth Clark, *The Other Half: a Self-Portrait* (London: John Murray, 1977), pp. 137-8.

commercialism.’<sup>92</sup> The editorial of the first issue of the *TV Times* made clear what the failings of the BBC monopoly were considered to be:

Television is at last given the real freedom of the air. The event is comparable with the abolition of the law that kept motor-cars chugging sedately behind a man carrying a red flag.

Now it’s the ‘go’ signal, the green light for TV too – with no brake on enterprise or imagination.

So far, television in this country has been a monopoly restricted by limited finance, and often, or so it seemed, restricted by a lofty attitude towards the wishes of viewers by those in control.

That situation now undergoes a great and dramatic change. Viewers will no longer have to accept what is deemed best for them. They will be able to pick and choose.

And the new Independent Television planners aim at giving viewers what viewers want – at the time viewers want it.<sup>93</sup>

But the belief that the BBC was an organisation out of touch with the times had to be carefully negotiated.

A set of values based on public service remained embedded in commercial television, which was strictly regulated. The quest to produce accessible entertainment and offer choice to replace the stuffiness of the BBC did not negate ideas of ‘good taste’, integrity and public service. ITV’s standards and populist policies were made clearer by the TV Editor of the *New York Post*, Jay Tuck, who, writing in the *TV Times* soon after its launch, discussed what for him was the major difference between commercial UK and US television. ‘Advertiser-control all too often means aiming the programme at the lowest common denominator in order to reach the maximum number of potential customers and it is responsible for many of

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<sup>92</sup> Tinker, *The Television Barons*, p. 28.

<sup>93</sup> Anon, ‘Editorial’, *TV Times*, 22 September – 1 October 1955, p. 3.

the worst abuses of our [US] system', he explained.<sup>94</sup> In Britain, however, public service television would be improved and strengthened by a commercial rival rather than threatened and undermined by it. A distinction was being made between a view of the BBC as a hidebound institution that was out of touch, and a more abstracted notion of the service values associated with it that 'Independent Television' and the ITA would continue to uphold. A synthesis was not only possible, but desirable, between commercial and public service broadcasting because the 'best' programmes – documentaries, educational programmes - were so expensive that they could only be done with the support of commercial funding from television advertising. The safeguards would include regulating the amount and type of advertising allowed on British television to ensure 'advertisements may not be inserted otherwise than at the beginning or end of programme items or in natural breaks within them.'<sup>95</sup> A regulated commercial broadcaster in the UK would avoid the lowering of standards when advertisers or sponsors rather than programme contractors were in control of the shows as had happened in America.

The new values of spectacle and entertainment that the adventure series within the new form of the telefilm would seek to use, therefore, did not eliminate the 'old' values; however, they did place them into contradiction with values of service and liveness. It was this contradiction that was at the heart of the debate of ITV's populist policies and the creation of a mass audience for the first time in the late 1950s and early 1960s, culminating in the Pilkington Report in 1962. This period in television history can be interpreted as a cultural shift from the BBC's out-moded paternalism

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<sup>94</sup> Jay Nelson Tuck, 'British TV Has the Advantage', *TV Times*, 15-21 October 1955, p. 14.

<sup>95</sup> ITA, 'Advertising', *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1955-56, p. 19.

that took place during the mid 1950s in favour of an innovative and populist ITV. Using this paradigm, ITV's ambition was to represent the 'modern' Britain of the late 1950s and 1960s that had broken free of the BBC's stuffy constraints within a rapidly changing world brought on by the pace of technology. It is interesting to note how often the theme of the speed of change appears in articles in *TV Times* linked to modernity.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, as we will see, the earlier values of public broadcasting were not abandoned, but expected to become an important part of ITV's commercial appeal. Using a specific television form, some of the competing discourses of the time can be analysed to understand how what appeared to be rival ideologies about the function of television came to be reconciled and sought to enrich each other mutually throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Televisual Flow, Programming and the Homogenised Text**

It is worth recalling Raymond Williams' concept of television's flow at this point. If it was in the interests of producers, schedulers and audiences to respect generic differentiation between and within programming areas, it was also the case, as John Ellis has argued, that audiences tended to watch an evening's worth of television rather than specific programmes,<sup>97</sup> albeit with the choice of two channels after 1955, and three after 1964.

Raymond Williams first wrote about his model of flow in 1974. While working as a critic for *The Listener* (1968-72) he had noticed that everything on

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<sup>96</sup> For example, Ronald F. Tiltman, 'It's the Speed of TV that Deceives the Eye', *TV Times*, 28 October – 3 November 1955, p. 3. The fascination with speed, invention and obsolescence was also part of an attempt to conflate art and industry in early 'pop' art.

<sup>97</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 111-126.

television had become rather like everything else. For Williams, the significance of the difference between broadcasting, including radio, and previous cultural forms was not simply in the distribution of programmes to the home but ‘a sequence or set of alternative sequences of these and other similar events [plays, meetings and stories] which are then available in a single dimension and in a single operation’.<sup>98</sup> The move from ‘programming’ to ‘flow’ or the notion of seriality had been hard to identify in Britain because the service ethic had preserved programmes as a fixed unity and ‘...the older concept of programming – the temporal sequence within which mix and proportion and balance operate – is still active and still to some extent real’.<sup>99</sup>

However, increasingly after the arrival of advertisements in 1955 on ITV interrupting the programme sequence, coherent separate texts that signified ‘proportion, balance and mix’, began to develop as a flow, according to Williams, and formed a montage:

It would be like...having read two plays, three newspapers, three or four magazines, on the same day that one has been to a variety show and a lecture and a football match. And yet it is not like that at all, for though the items may be various the television experience has in some important ways unified them.<sup>100</sup>

For Williams, flow was a process by which broadcast TV tended to minimise and altogether deface the differences between programmes. He saw flow as a result of the industrialisation of British television which was changing the terms of programme sequencing from the idea of public service broadcasting consisting of mix, proportion

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<sup>98</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1974), p. 87. The equivalence of television with the older broadcasting form of radio is described by Williams, but lies outside the scope of the thesis.

<sup>99</sup> Williams, *Television*, p. 89.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

and balance and into his own experience of watching commercial US television. Flow assembled disparate items, such as advertisements and trailers and placed them within the same experience, but it did not organise them to produce an overall meaning. For Williams, flow was a feature of TV that compromised and altered both the separate texts that TV had produced and the texts which it had appropriated to its own use e.g. feature films. Instead, his model was one of self-contained texts which, because they appeared in a flow, had had their distinctive characteristics reduced or eliminated.

In helping to elaborate his theory of flow, Williams described his first experience of commercial television in America. In Miami, he found the number of interruptions to the film he was watching disconcerting:

I can still not be sure what I took from that whole flow. I believe I registered some incidents as happening in the wrong film, and some characters in the commercials as involved in the film episodes, in what came to seem – for all the occasional bizarre disparities – a single irresponsible flow of images and feelings.<sup>101</sup>

Williams was fresh to American television and his lack of familiarity with the use of interruptions made up of commercials and trailers in American TV meant that he was not capable of documenting the American televisual experience accurately.

Moreover, his familiarity with the British model of public service broadcasting which he identified by the ‘proportion and balance’ afforded a programme meant that his method of analysis has been described as ‘a pathology of television [and flow] a bad feature of general programme organisation rooted in commercial conditions of

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p.92. Williams does not date his visit to Miami.

production’.<sup>102</sup> In Williams’ analysis the single text is identified with coherence and acts as a repository of cultural capital that has a lasting or permanent cultural value, unlike a theory of television flow that focuses more on *process* than product and its consequences for reception. Nevertheless, Williams was able to focus attention on television as an institution, and highlighted the problems of dealing effectively with programmes in isolation by proposing as a general rule that flow is the central television experience.

The development of the concept of the mode of ‘light entertainment’ in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the blurring of generic boundaries can be understood as programming planned to some extent by the broadcasters as a flow of more or less indistinguishable sounds and images. In the UK, the development of programming rather than the production of separate programmes can be traced back to a two month visit to America in 1953 by Ronnie Waldman, the new Head of Light Entertainment at the BBC, who was sent to investigate American commercial television. He described how he ‘hated the jungle atmosphere of commercial television’, in particular the power of the sponsors.<sup>103</sup> However, he was ‘bowled over by the intoxicating discovery that the Americans accepted as perfectly natural that television was entertainment.’<sup>104</sup>

Importantly, he noticed that the Americans did not feel a need to compartmentalise entertainment and create a balance between it and news or ‘serious drama’ that the public service model within the BBC monopoly demanded at the time.

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<sup>102</sup> John Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 62.

<sup>103</sup> Peter Black, *The Mirror in the Corner: People’s Television* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1972), p. 23.

<sup>104</sup> Black, *The Mirror in the Corner*, p.23.



For example, in New York, Waldman saw an edition of the entertaining quiz show, *What's My Line?*, whose celebrity guest, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, had chaired the committee that had drafted and approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Typically, Waldman's home-grown panel game *Who Said That?*, hosted by Gilbert Harding, which was devised after his fact-finding mission to the US, was different from its American cousin, because it was defiantly cultural, based on a panel's ability to identify quotations and afterwards discuss their merits. Gilbert Harding had 'the manner of a didactic and irascible schoolmaster...' <sup>105</sup>

Local conditions of production included ideas to do with standards that formed taste-markers of style and aesthetics, and when these different ideas were syncretised they formed a debate about 'good television' as opposed to 'bad' television. In the critical discourse about television, good television in Britain was constructed through reference to that which was other than television – pre-existing theatre or literary works - against the idea of 'bad television'; but Ronnie Waldman ventured another interpretation of television in his discussion of Light Entertainment in 1951:

We do not pretend that Television Light Entertainment is a complete artform in itself and we realise that its material and its approach must be based on general ideas of Light Entertainment familiar to the public...too close an adherence to the forms of Sound Radio, the theatre, or the cinema will prevent the growth of TV as such and although most of the authoritative and experienced comedians in the country have had considerable experience of Sound Radio, we should be careful to avoid using the methods of Sound Radio when employing them. Similarly, purely 'theatre' techniques, e.g. Music Hall. <sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>106</sup> R. Waldman, 'Light Entertainment Policy', memo, BBC, WAC, T16/91/1, 6 April 1951.

Television Light Entertainment came to be viewed as a hybrid of all other forms rather than an essentialised ‘relay’ medium and would no longer be validated by existing art forms or the ‘real’ because it was simply live. This was an important concept that can be applied to many television programmes as they came to rely less on codes of theatrical naturalism and resulted in a variable form. As Waldman himself punned, ‘there was no lack of variety in Television Variety’.<sup>107</sup>

At the same time, the television modalities of variety/light entertainment, sport, the news and drama are different, and it is difficult to generalise about so many different forms using a concept like flow. A problem with Williams’ idea of flow is how he presented a mode of higher unity that consisted of the programmes themselves. For John Corner, Williams’ analytic focus appears to include only his own value judgments of flow being ‘irresponsible’, which he had identified as a feature of commercial conditions in America as the antithesis of public broadcasting in Britain.<sup>108</sup>

In part, Williams under-estimated the complexity of broadcast TV’s eclectic form that, informed by the interests of producers, schedulers *and* audiences, continued to respect differentiation, so that the schedule was designed to allow particular programmes to have the status of a special attraction, relegating other programmes to the status of supporting shorts. For example, the viewing guide in *TV Times* in the 1950s grouped programmes under separate headings – Plays, Features, Series and Serials, Light Entertainment, Panel Games and Quizzes, Music, Sport - so that they appeared more like an *à la carte* menu or today’s Electronic Programme Guide. This

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<sup>107</sup> Ronnie Waldman, ‘The Variety of Television Variety’, *Radio Times Annual* (London: BBC Publishing, 1954), pp. 52-53.

<sup>108</sup> Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Studies*, p. 62.

followed the logic of choice championed by 'Independent Television' in which the viewer was invited to make a selection according to his or her needs, as an early example of constructing both the audience and the reading subject. In this way, the audience had to be courted rather than patronised by the broadcaster. At the same time, a hierarchy had been created, in which Plays and Series and Serials appeared at the top of the page, and the entries for Light Entertainment and Sport at the bottom.

Nevertheless, as a consequence of the theory of flow proposed by Williams, it was John Ellis who proposed that British television programming lacks a 'narrative image'.<sup>109</sup> In the 1980s he developed Williams' original concept of flow by arguing that broadcasting had not developed the institution of the 'narrative image' because television had not created the experience of a single text which performed and completed the narrative image that was circulated within it.<sup>110</sup> Instead, television's form provided an expectation and anticipation built on the fact that it addressed an audience that did not give it its full attention. This had the final effect that narrative fiction in cinema and TV had developed different forms, and also had the effect that each medium had tended to use different signifying practices to create meaning and coherence within the narrative.

However, as early as the 1960s, each of the US television networks - NBC, ABC, and CBS - had sought to 'madly differentiate its programming from the others, and the very real significance of *narrative image* [my italics] in achieving success within that market'.<sup>111</sup> The 'narrative image' had been defined by Ellis as 'the cinema

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<sup>109</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 30.

<sup>110</sup> Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 126.

<sup>111</sup> Jeffrey Miller, *Something Completely Different: British Television and American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2000), p. 39.

industry's anticipatory reply to the question "What is this film like?" ...it is the promise, and the film is the performance and realisation of that promise.'<sup>112</sup> For Ellis, the narrative image was composed of advance publicity and conversation about the film, as well as a general knowledge about the actors, director, producers, and other elements of the creation and production of a given film. But he has argued that the concept of the narrative image can only apply to a film at the cinema which requires single product differentiation, but not television because it relies too much on standardisation of story and formularisation of character type within the overall idea of flow. There has been the displacement of an author-based dramatic form to a producer-based mode because flow is a process that co-ordinates a sequence of programmes rather than rely on the individually bounded programme.

This ignores that television strands its output, so that different programmes appear at different times on the schedule depending on a set of values that assigns cultural and economic importance to them. Ellis argues that television lacks a narrative image, but he offered, in the 1980s, the alternative that television in general, but using examples taken from British television, had a 'segmental form'. For Ellis, segmentalisation was due to television's need to hold the viewer with a particular mixture of change and continuity. Instead of the flow of disparate events, Ellis has commented that '[Williams] underestimates the complexity of broadcast TV's particular commodity form, which has very little to do with the single text.'<sup>113</sup> The cinema would offer an uninterrupted showing of a film, but television would offer

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<sup>112</sup> Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118.

segments, a characteristic not only of commercial broadcasting, but the standard form of TV construction for the BBC.<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, in the 1960s, when the erosion of firm generic boundaries and a concept of flow are traced to the development of light entertainment modalities, programmes like *Danger Man* had an existence in the *TV Times* under Series and Serials. Moreover, ITC's adventure programmes, from the late 1950s swashbucklers, proved popular as they became eagerly anticipated on a weekly basis. To help create this popularity that relied, in part, on its 'narrative image' they had opening titles that announced to the audience that the programme was different from everyday TV – this was at a time when very little money or time would be spent on the titles of a show.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, the *TV Times* would say about *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 'Goodly viewer, methinks thou wouldst perchance hear tidings of Robin Hood. Hast thou viewed these past Sundays?'<sup>116</sup> Such dialogue may be at other times unfashionable and stilted, but it set the tone as a 'must-see' show when it was first shown.

Later, the titles from series four and, especially, series five of the (filmed) *The Avengers* would come a long way since the end captions of a television show had come from a camera pointed at a caption stand on the studio floor.<sup>117</sup> The programme titles in the fifth series of *The Avengers* sought to convey the essence of a programme's identity through an associative strategy of imagery, sound and music.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.119.

<sup>115</sup> The titles for *Robin Hood* can be seen at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekwtuE0zyOs&feature=related>> [accessed January 2011]. These opening credits have been adapted for US TV by including the name of the sponsor, but indicate how it was possible to create a 'narrative image' for a television show.

<sup>116</sup> Edward Fox, 'How Robin Hood Was Filmed', *TV Times*, 1-7 October 1955, pp. 6-7 (p. 6).

<sup>117</sup> John W. Pettinger, *From Dawn to Dusk: A History of Independent Television in the Midlands* (Studley: Brewin Books, 2007), p. 52.

Sometimes, there was a close-up on an object such as the umbrella owned by Steed to give it a symbolic emphasis as well as its literal depiction. The associative imagery operated on a more metaphoric suggestiveness at some distance from the primary depictive object. For example, the opening titles exploit a complex series of knowing looks and the sequence confronts viewers with the fact that they are watching a concocted dramatic production. The notion of escapist entertainment is compromised for a fleeting moment by the knowing looks between the characters of Steed and Peel. The foregrounding of the umbrella, the bowler hat and the gun handled by Peel, serves to emphasise that the series was about stylishness or, rather, about notions of high style that few other programmes had managed.

Moreover, the telefilms were often accompanied by a considerable ancillary publicity campaign which was prepared precisely to distinguish one from the other. For example, when the fourth series of *The Avengers* was bought by the ABC Network in the US, the first network sale to America by ABC Television of the UK was accompanied by a tour of America and Canada by the stars of the show. On 12 March 1966, Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg left England for New York as guests of ABC-TV in the US. They made a four city tour of Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington from 14 March to 18 March to promote *The Avengers*. On 21 March and 22, they visited Canada where the series was already being shown and went to stay in Montreal to meet Canadian TV affiliates, trade press and programme sponsors at a reception during the Annual Canadian Broadcasters' Convention.<sup>118</sup> Such a busy

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<sup>118</sup> Anon, 'Avengers Stars Off to US for Launch of Series', *Television Mail*, 18 March 1966, p. 10.

schedule revealed the importance of pre-publicity which was expected to aid the success of a successful show on both sides of the Atlantic.

A little earlier, *Variety* reporter Roger Watkins noted in a November article that *Secret Agent* (the American title for *Danger Man*) had ‘firmly nailed a once-predominant notion that British production values are too sluggish for the US “big-league” broadcasters’.<sup>119</sup> The production values were so good that the ATV adventure series was nominated by Hollywood’s Screen Producers Guild of America for an award as ‘The Best Produced TV Programme’ for 1965.<sup>120</sup> McGoohan had already been awarded in March 1965 ‘TV Personality of the Year’ by the Variety Club of Great Britain, but *Secret Agent* was the first British TV series to be nominated for an award by the Screen Producers Guild which represented all the top Hollywood film producers.

Therefore, specific television items in the British television schedule, as well as the American, could seek a special ‘event’ status. On TV this can, of course, be an ‘actuality’ such as a state occasion or sports event, but it was often a piece of narrative fiction shot on film. Considerable investment in money and advance publicity would go into creating an ‘event’, as a particular narrative item appeared in the television schedule, with the aim of lifting it out of the flow by according it a special status. This was also the case during the pre-publicity for *The Prisoner* (discussed in detail in chapter 4). The creative flair that Patrick McGoohan brought to *The Prisoner* was reported in the *TV Times* in 1967 as ‘McGoohan believes that he is breaking into completely new television territory – in presentation and stories alike...he has worked

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<sup>119</sup> Roger Watkins, ‘British Prepare US Invasion – Majors, Indies Pitching Shows’, *Variety*, 3 November 1965, p. 25.

<sup>120</sup> Anon, ‘*Danger Man* Named for Hollywood’, *Television Mail*, 4 March 1966, p. 6.

on every script, irrespective of who may have written it.’<sup>121</sup> Crucially here, aesthetic value predicated on an author-based dramatic form was used as a marketing strategy to create a discourse of value and quality that could be used to attract viewers. Some of the ways that authorship and ideas around ‘creativity’ within the industrialising process of television, were used as a method for popular television, are discussed later in chapters four and five.

However, the balance between individual programmes and programming or, to put it another way, the various forms of sequencing important to the television schedule has led to the opinion that seriality is the paradigmatic form of television programming. As we have already seen, John Ellis believes that television has a segmented form. He has argued that this form has met the requirements of the television economy for a regular and extensive supply of programmes that can be marshalled together to form a typical weekly schedule, but which can also offer a mix of change and continuity. Therefore, TV from the 1960s had relied on a segment of several minutes as its basic unit. One illustration of what Ellis meant by segmentation was the fact that British television drama often took the form of the serial or series.<sup>122</sup> Ellis compared this fictional form to television news; there is a continuous updating of events rather than a final ending or explanation.<sup>123</sup> A characteristic of the serial or series was that these segments tended never to produce closure that invited a totalising account of the narrative world on offer. In other words, they lacked much of cinema’s omniscient narration and closure. The classical narrative form of cinema with its insistence on ‘closure’ had been replaced by television’s ‘open’ narrative in the

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<sup>121</sup> Anon, ‘New on Southern This Week’, *TV Times*, 30 September - 6 October 1967, p. 4.

<sup>122</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.120.

<sup>123</sup> Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p.120.



serial/series. Even though events were frequently inter-cut, there was rarely any parallelism between events beyond that of a simple simultaneous happening, and a general connection between the characters.

This account is not without problems. Ellis claimed television lacked enigmas and the resolution of enigmas, but the adventure series often possessed a closed narrative because each week there was a new puzzle to be solved. John Drake in *Danger Man* was a skilled professional who had to be resourceful getting the job done - for example, the rescue of a diplomat - with minimum fuss. Although the shows were shot with pace and gloss, and, admittedly, some predictability, they continued to use narratives that depended on a series of enigmas and several character types borrowed from the mythologies of the Cold War. Drake would be employed by NATO. For example, in the first episode, *View from the Villa*, an American banker is directly responsible for a large reserve of gold in Rome as part of the United States' NATO contributions before he is found beaten to death.<sup>124</sup> Drake is assigned to solve the crime and his next step is to frequent the restaurant which Frank Delroy, the victim, has used. Meanwhile, he has met a woman who witnessed the killing, but unlike Bond, does not seduce her. Finally, he and the woman are apprehended by the killers at a small seaside resort (Portmeirion) and Drake conquers the villain and to a degree possesses the heroine. The enigmas in some of the television adventure series, examined in chapters four and five, may not have always been particularly dense, but a familiarity with the characters and the repeated situations did not necessarily negate the possibility of a narrative that relied on a sometimes complex

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<sup>124</sup> *Danger Man*, 'View from the Villa', originally transmitted, 11 September 1960.

understanding to make an appeal to its audience. A single narrative enigma might be included, instead of an intimate narrative made up of segments, to appeal to a domestic audience.

Umberto Eco offers another interesting alternative to the view of television as the destroyer of meaning that can be applied to some of the popular adventure TV programmes of the 1960s such as *Danger Man*. In his work examining the Bond phenomenon of the 1960s he proposes an aesthetic that rejects the modernist claim of innovation and novelty, and high information content. Instead, in an uncertain and unstable age it should not be surprising that people are attracted to the repetitive nature of so much television. His original Structuralist approach to the ‘average reader’ assumes that it was possible to identify the basis of his/her pleasure without any reference to the frameworks of intertextual reference which animate his/her reading practice. The adventure (spy) thriller has been said to be one of the most regulated and coded of all genres.<sup>125</sup> Eco discovers that the Bond stories are built on a series of ‘oppositions’ which allow a limited number of possible permutations, including oppositions between Great Britain and non Anglo-Saxon countries and the Free World and the Soviet Union.<sup>126</sup> He compares the Bond stories to the metaphor of a game of chess or, using a structural analysis, a ‘narrating machine’:

...there are already all the elements for the building of a machine that would function basically as a unit along very simple, straight lines, conforming to the strict rules of combination. This machine, which was to function without deviation of fortune in the novels that followed, lies at the basis of the success of the “007 saga” – a success which,

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<sup>125</sup> James Chapman, *Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p.56.

<sup>126</sup> Umberto Eco, ‘Narrative Structures in Fleming’, in Oreste Del Buono and Umberto Eco (eds), *The Bond Affair* (London: MacDonald, 1966), pp. 35-75 (pp.37-38).

singularly, has been due both to the adulation of the masses and to the appreciation of more sophisticated readers.<sup>127</sup>

Arguing that there is no basic variation in the plot in the Bond novel but rather a repetition of a habitual scheme, Eco conceded that within this habitual scheme, unexpected events, particularly the revelation of the identity of the criminal, may occur. Yet in the Bond novels the invariant scheme of the plot 'follows the same chain of events and has the same characters, and it is always known from the beginning who is the culprit, also his characteristics and plans.'<sup>128</sup> The pleasure for the reader was to recognise the rules of a 'game' that allowed for some minor variations in the overall development of the narrative, but ultimately arrive at the same forgone conclusion.

At the same time, a sophisticated reader could take pleasure that, unlike the average viewer, they were able to recognise the rules and the text could work as a social or educational marker. '[Bond] pleases the sophisticated readers who here distinguish, with a feeling of aesthetic pleasure, the purity of the primitive epic impudently and maliciously translated into current terms; and applaud in Fleming the cultured man, whom they recognise as one of themselves...'<sup>129</sup> Here we have the idea of a game that allows both symbol manipulation and symbol interpretation and the possibility of the audience becoming increasingly sophisticated and discriminating.

Some evidence for Eco's Structuralist approach to Bond can be found in other texts such as *The Avengers*. John Bryce, the producer of the show, wrote in the 1960s about its use of 'formula art': 'You could call *The Avengers*...a kind of formula art.

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<sup>127</sup> Eco, 'Narrative Structures in Fleming', pp. 37-8.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

That is, each episode must conform to certain requirements: right must be opposed by wrong...Granted...the good script-writer bends, manipulates, re-shapes it every time, but he must never abandon or shatter it.’<sup>130</sup> A Structuralist approach can be used to suggest that a mass entertainment show like *The Avengers* was incapable of resisting, and could provide an alternative to, the aesthetic degradation of mass culture. But if we were to accept Eco’s argument that popular action adventure texts like the Bond films were ‘narrating machine[s]’, the only function of *The Avengers* would be as guarantor of its ideological hegemony and control.

It is true that much television drama of the 1960s and 1970s, rather than being characterised by the homogenous text that had been inherited from cinema, exploited what Williams had defined as the ‘flow’ of the televisual image, to produce series drama that was to act as a hybrid between cinema and TV’s specific forms. At the same time, many of the action-adventure programmes like *Danger Man* (ITC, 1960-66) and *The Avengers* (ABC/Thames TV, 1961-69) were marked by their upmarket or cinematic pretensions in which their generic characteristics were emphasised and had an increasingly complex visual style, but they continued to conform to a model of programming already familiar to television fiction including the mixed modalities of light entertainment scheduled for a mixed domestic audience. *The Avengers* was a show that from the mid 1960s responded to and revealed the complexity and ambiguity that was beginning to be seen on television by the early 1960s.

For example, a Structuralist analysis would be incapable of recognising all the complexity of the episode *The Girl from Auntie* from the fourth series of *The*

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<sup>130</sup> John Bryce, ‘Producer of *The Avengers*, ABC TV’, *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.16, Summer 1964, pp. 6-8 (p.7).

*Avengers*.<sup>131</sup> In the episode, there are a series of eccentrics engaged in various nefarious activities, including Liz Fraser who, having become an established star of British light entertainment and comedy, improbably plays a Sloane-Ranger girl called Georgie Pryce-Jones impersonating Emma Peel.<sup>132</sup> Sylvia Coleridge played the eponymous homicidal auntie and is employed by the villainous organisation, Art Incorporate. She uses knitting needles to kill her victims as well as knit scarves and jumpers for Arkwright's Knitting Circle led by another 'family favourite', Bernard Cribbins, playing one of the villains. One of the pleasures of this episode, like so many others, for a domestic audience must have been watching a favourite actor already familiar from British film and television playing against type in which the concocted narrative scarcely matters. If it was watched in Britain, the appeal of an indigenous adventure series had additional meanings about the characters that could be encoded into the narrative and recognised by the audience besides a clash between the binary opposites discovered by Eco of British/non-Anglo-Saxon; Free World/Soviet Union; Duty/Sacrifice. At the same time, the narrative could be understood within the conventions of these binary opposites, and there would be recognition, by the audience, of the national myth of British eccentricity, as well as the less tentative, more fixed meanings offered by the programme makers, in order to continue to appeal abroad.

To this end, narrative structure may be not immanently present in the text. The text can be related to something other than its own structure and it is important to explain how it comes to be *structured*. To do this, John Fiske explores the theory of

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<sup>131</sup> *The Avengers*, 'The Girl from Auntie', originally transmitted, 22 January 1966.

<sup>132</sup> She had appeared in seven episodes of the first BBC television series of *Hancock's Half Hour* in 1959, and, in that sense, was literally the 'girl from Auntie'.

flow, but within the terms of his own emphasis on the potential of the television text to offer multiple meaning (polysemy) and, crucially, its capacity to produce variable viewer interpretation. For Fiske, flow is too unsympathetic a term for the cultural character of television. For him, Williams' criticism of flow 'seems to derive from his literary desire for a named author to be responsible for a text, and for this responsibility to be exercised in the production of a coherent, unified text'.<sup>133</sup> For Fiske 'Flow, with its connotations of a languid river, is perhaps an unfortunate metaphor: the movement of the television text is discontinuous, interrupted, and segmented. Its attempts at closure, at a unitary meaning, or a unified viewing subject, are constantly subjected to fracturing forces.'<sup>134</sup>

In this way, the audience is not a passive recipient of whatever popular culture is foisted upon them, but, crucially, can play an active part in the process of decoding messages within the text and interpreting them. John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado's approach to the production of the television text in their study of the production of *Doctor Who* has sought to demonstrate the 'analytic mutuality' between the agency of the production staff and the development of production and reception spaces:<sup>135</sup>

Intentional content...does not...provide the meaning of a programme in any simplistic way. Even where producers are aware of them, they are quickly recoded according to the professional values of good drama, appropriate television...External references...however, help locate the programme both in terms of its institutional need for the novelty-within-continuity, and its perceived audience...<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 100.

<sup>134</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, p. 105.

<sup>135</sup> John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado, 'Send-up: Authorship and Organisation', in Tony Bennett (ed.), *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production Reading* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 293-314.

<sup>136</sup> Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado, 'Send-up: Authorship and Organisation', pp.293-314 (pp. 294-295).

It was the development of light entertainment and the blurring of dramatic boundaries that, in the 1960s, meant the adventure series could use an eclectic as well as a regulated form as a response to television's flow suggested by Williams and which also complicates the idea of segmentation proposed by Ellis. Just as the viewer of early 'live' television could recognise and appreciate 'difference' in the filmed commercials between a programme's scenes, the skilled or habituated viewer was able to recognise and understand the different modes of address contained in any one strand of the flow within his/her own televisual culture. Rather, television flow in the UK consisted of an array of intertwined and usually separate texts, but the potential for cross-fertilisation between these separate texts is what made television form truly eclectic rather than simply diverse. The efforts involved at all stages of the drama production in Britain in the 1960s, the amount spent on publicity and the importance attached to scheduling of 'event' programmes such as *The Avengers* or *The Prisoner*, would support the view of some British telefilm adventure series as having a special status within the television schedule, but, crucially, its varied style incorporated a synthesis of merchandising, informative, and dramatic goals.

Nevertheless, although this thesis argues that flow is not essentially *medium* specific, it acknowledges that flow can be understood to be *historically* specific. Programming became more important than separate programmes, which was interpreted and referenced by television in the period under observation, not only specifically by types of scheduling, but also because of the rivalry between ITV and the BBC as they competed for viewers. One strategy formed by ITV in the late 1950s that acknowledged the new importance of programming and the production of the telefilm series, meant that ITV's strengths became the production of 'entertainment

programmes'. These would be sold as a package or a series often with an international appeal rather than separate texts as such.

British commercial broadcasters were making programmes for abroad, including the American TV market, by the mid 1950s. Helen Wheatley argues that '...British commercial television also produced a number of its own drama series which reflected this American "cinematic" aesthetic...' <sup>137</sup> However, an early series, such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955-59), not only conformed to an American aesthetic, but was able to offer an expanded capacity for complex storytelling. The history of the British adventure telefilm was the deployment of an increasingly complex narrative than had been hitherto used. The expanded capacity of the form would also lead to the deployment of the film image to enhance the script or storytelling abilities of a series. Although it should not be forgotten that the primary production purpose of an ITV mass entertainment programme was to win audiences and make a profit, its episodes could be disposed towards viewing that, at times, complicated the representation of foreign countries or the technology of colour (explored in chapter three). The adventure series of the 1960s that centred round the theme of espionage, the concept of the spy or the amateur detective could, one way or another, often create a continuum between the script and the image, so that the adventure genre or series became additionally coded with discourses to do with tourism and conspicuous consumption.

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<sup>137</sup> Helen Wheatley, 'ITV 1955-89: Populism and Experimentation', in Michele Hilmes (ed.), *The Television History Book* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), pp. 76-81 (p. 78).



## The Producer-Text-Audience Relationship

One consequence of television eclecticism is that authorship criticism in television has been generally more difficult to sustain than at the cinema. John Caughie refers only to a 'wild theory' that can be applied to television because 'The forms of analysis appropriated from film – semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalysis – seemed to stumble over the diversity of the television text, the programme in all its variety, which turned out to be less like a film than we had thought.'<sup>138</sup> One approach in this thesis is, therefore, to examine the operation of ideology, economics and technology and how a television image is of a particular social organisation in order to ask questions of the changes in the adventure series. However, this has meant that many episodes of an adventure series such as *Department S* (1969-70) and *The Persuaders* (1971-72) had a *very* close relationship to others.<sup>139</sup> Perhaps, as a consequence, none of these ITC programmes lasted more than one season.

In contrast, some shows such as *The Avengers* and *Special Branch* are less open to a Structuralist analysis deploying an absolutely rigid set of narrative conventions. In the former, there could be an almost post-modernist desire to subvert the 'rules' by creating a pastiche of the secret agent and to use intertext references to other television programmes and films. For example, in the episode *Epic*,<sup>140</sup> Emma is kidnapped by a villain called Z.Z. von Schnerk who is clearly modelled on Erich

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<sup>138</sup> Caughie, *Television Drama*, p. 9.

<sup>139</sup> Most of these shows were produced by Monty Berman and scripted by Denis Spooner who formed with Berman a production company called Scoton Productions. See chapter 2 for a short analysis of *The Saint* and Berman's other company, Tempean Films.

<sup>140</sup> *The Avengers*, 'Epic', originally broadcast, 1 April 1967.

von Stroheim.<sup>141</sup> Later, *Special Branch* employed a range of themes and ideas borrowed from the two major strands of the spy narrative identified at the beginning of this chapter. But it also referred to other sources, including, as this thesis discovers, photographic imagery usually associated with glossy advertising, as well as contemporary Hollywood films.

In richer texts, it can be argued, the enjoyment for many people was tied to the fact that less sophisticated viewers would view it as alien or else only enjoy the more obvious narrative conventions of right versus wrong as long as right worked for the British government.<sup>142</sup> As Kingsley Amis pointed out, the quality of the text can work as a social or educational marker rather than having an objective basis. Amis would argue about *The Avengers* that:

Who actually employs Mrs Gale?...But the whole point is that the question of employment doesn't arise. They are a pair of heroic free-lances who knock off a couple of world-wide conspiracies in the intervals of choosing their spring wardrobe. All of this is, so to speak, a wink at the audience, a joke shared with them...This kind of game is impossible unless the producers have confidence in their audience, who must have the mental agility to appreciate the odd satirical nudge while still believing in the story as a thriller. I don't think it's fantastic to call such mental agility 'sophistication'. At the opposite end of the scale...comes the viewer who can't distinguish between fiction and reality. I'm thinking of the *Coronation Street* fans who wrote to Len Fairclough threatening to come and fill him in if he didn't mend his ways. Non-sophistication could hardly go further.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> James Chapman, 'The Avengers: Television and Popular Culture during the High Sixties', in Anthony Aldgate, James Chapman and Arthur Marwick (eds), *Windows on the Sixties: Exploring key Texts of Media and Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 37-69 (p.62).

<sup>142</sup> As an example of this are the fan sites of *The Avengers* which include discussion of genre, gender and fashion among other topics. See Anon, Dead Duck: *The Avengers* Publications <<http://deadduck.theavengers.tv/fanzineindex.htm>> [accessed December 2010].

<sup>143</sup> Kingsley Amis, 'Looking-in is Looking Up!', *TV Times*, 9-15 February 1964, p. 7.

A further point is that the gaze of the cultivated, sophisticated arbiters of culture, for example, a 'young' audience attracted to the complex style of *The Avengers*, could be in opposition to the 'narrating machine' of the story devised by its script editor, Brian Clemens, a man who had learnt his craft from the Danzinger Brothers before writing for ITC during production of *The Invisible Man*.<sup>144</sup> The *Avengers* growing appeal to youth in the mid to late 1960s and the usages of some types of Pop Art in television allows for an analysis in chapter four that finds some elements of uniqueness *and* convention in the richer texts. Nevertheless, most television shows are diachronic and betray their origins. This is an argument brought to bear later in the analysis of 'unique' shows such as *The Prisoner* and the uniqueness claimed by *TV Times* for a programme such as *Special Branch*, as presumably the first of its kind.

The emergence of the adventure series on film in the 1960s was, at least partly, indebted to changes in the structure and organisation of the British television industry in the 1950s, which will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter. The degree to which the adventure series was exported to form a transatlantic television industry, in the case of first, ITC, and later ABC-TV, was part of a developing trend of the globalisation of popular cultural texts. In the 1960s, the growth of global exports in television had led to a greater awareness of the importance of a televisual aesthetic in Britain, a set of rules similar to those which might be applied to a film. On the one hand, the best television was non-ephemeral, taking on the properties of film, and escaped from and transcended its instantaneous, transient nature. However,

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<sup>144</sup> See chapter 4, p. 198.

instead of seeking durability, another view saw television's aesthetic as being true to its nature as a medium, a nature that was instant, superficial and ephemeral.<sup>145</sup> The tension between these two views, the one stressing timelessness and the other TV's ephemeral nature, was in Britain a critical debate that drew on earlier debates about the status of popular culture within a mass medium as well as service values against commercial values on television.

In *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams describes how aesthetic theory in the Romantic period saw the artist as essentially opposed to society, achieving personal expression in the face of a hostile world and, therefore, valuing his creation all the more for this. 'In this conception...the Artist is by nature indifferent to the crude worldliness and materialism of politics and social affairs; he is devoted, rather, to the more substantial spheres of beauty and personal feeling.'<sup>146</sup> Graham Murdock has pointed out that analysis of the role of the writer in television drama has tended to start either from the notion of 'authentic' and 'creative' authorship, or from the notion of the craftsman constrained by the restriction of a ratings-orientated industry. A term that is useful here is the 'wordsmith', which implies an ability to work to order and fit the requirements of writing for a regulated form like television. Murdock traces this history of 'authorship' and the 'mass market' from the beginnings of commercial publishing dedicated to the mass and prestige markets. There was a 'primary' sector

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<sup>145</sup> This touches upon the relay function of television discussed earlier.

<sup>146</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), p. 30.

of the cultural industries devoted to producing material that was designed to maximise audiences.<sup>147</sup>

Since they were craftsmen, wordsmiths turned out scripts to other people's specifications. On the other hand, a 'secondary' sector used an ideology of authorship that accorded the writer expressive autonomy. By the time television got under way in the 1950s the major ideological and institutional divisions within the cultural industries were already firmly established, and television drama was obliged to accommodate them. Moreover, for Murdock, the emphasis on literary expression in English and television drama's early dependence on theatrical material was to combine with the influence of radio drama. Although radio was a non-visual medium, the emphasis on the spoken word had already established a model of the writer-as-auteur within broadcasting if s/he was creating 'serious' drama. According to Murdock:

In pursuit of maximum audiences, the popular series and serials took over from the performer orientation of Hollywood and the entertainment industry. From the titles onwards (*Dixon*, *Quatermass*, *Callan*, *Lillie*) the whole form of presentation explicitly invited viewers to identify with the central characters and to get involved in their dilemmas week by week. In contrast, single play production derived its ethos primarily from the 'serious' theatre and worked from the beginning with the ideology of authorship.<sup>148</sup>

Yet clearly, this argument does not simply support the authored event-status shows such as the 'serious' single play, but also a series that underscored its textual borders such as *The Avengers* with its 'signature' style under the tutelage of Brian

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<sup>147</sup> Graham Murdock, 'Authorship and Organisation', *Screen Education*, no. 35, Summer 1980, pp. 19-34.

<sup>148</sup> Graham Murdock, 'Authorship and Organisation', p. 24.

Clemens. Here authorship was an essential part of the presentation of each episode and would become not simply embodied in the figure of the writer, but also a distinctive outcome of a collaborative work practice between creative personnel and finally as a marker of institutional and corporate (ITV) identity. To this end, by the time of the fifth colour series *The Avengers*' distinctive style became more in the service of 'pop' rather than plot or character to make an appeal to 'youth culture'. For example, Chapman has noted that, in the episode *Game*,<sup>149</sup> the plot appears to be informed by 'the then vogueish structuralist analysis of narrative by scholars such as Umberto Eco.'<sup>150</sup> The artifice of the film world is drawn attention to in this episode, but relies on an understanding of popular culture by the audience in order to comprehend its fullest meaning:

In 'Game' the conventions of the super agent thriller become quite literally a game, the game of 'Super Secret Agent' that the villain makes Steed play in order to rescue Tara, who is imprisoned in a giant hour-glass with sand running through it...Steed finally wins the game by breaking the rules...'Game' therefore parodies the whole secret agent genre by reducing it to the level of a game, but ends by breaking the rules of the genre – something that would be unthinkable in a straight secret agent story.<sup>151</sup>

It can be said that television in the 1960s eroded the distinction between high culture and popular culture. It is because of this erosion, although not erasure, that popular culture became for many practitioners of cultural studies the primary object of

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<sup>149</sup> *The Avengers*, 'Game', originally transmitted 2 October 1968.

<sup>150</sup> James Chapman, 'The Avengers: Television and Popular Culture during the High Sixties', in James Chapman, Arthur Marwick and Anthony Aldgate (eds), *Windows on the Sixties: Exploring Key Texts of Media and Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 37-69 (p. 62).

<sup>151</sup> Chapman, 'Television and Popular Culture during the High Sixties', p. 62.

inquiry from the 1960s onwards.<sup>152</sup> The erosion, it was argued, was leading to postmodernism.<sup>153</sup> As we have seen, *The Avengers* can be read, as Chapman claims, as one of the first genuinely post-modern television series.<sup>154</sup> Its use of pastiche, irony and the foregrounding of style over narrative or the loss of a ‘meta-narrative’ have been argued to exhibit the characteristics of a postmodern text. The earlier schism between modernism and popular art in the twentieth century meant that they had not interacted, although popular art could be assimilated to, and transformed by, modernist aesthetic practices; for example, Brechtian ‘epic’ theatre had used elements borrowed from the circus, film and music hall. However, instead of a schism, it was in the austerity Britain of the 1950s that an interest was growing in the visual qualities of American popular arts and the championing of an industrial culture – Pop Art - that allowed for a duality of art and technology, which would appear later in some of the adventure shows to be looked at.

The Independent Group had been a loose collection of artists and designers in Britain who had met officially between 1952 and 1955 and are usually seen as early proponents of Pop Art in the UK.<sup>155</sup> One of their spokesmen, the artist John McHale, had articulated their beliefs. The most significant achievements of the Independent Group were a reworking of modernism as a revision of the role of the consumer and a re-evaluation of the high/low culture divide. The new media landscape of the 1950s

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<sup>152</sup> For example, Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* (1957) is a seminal account of the emergent post-modernist valorisation of popular culture. See Marianne Dekoven, *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Post-Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 57-71.

<sup>153</sup> On the imbrication of postmodernism with popular culture, see Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>154</sup> Chapman, ‘Television and Popular Culture during the High Sixties’, p. 58.

<sup>155</sup> Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 1-3.

was to represent an acceleration of everyday life which required ‘an array of symbolic images of man which will match up to the requirements of constant change, fleeting impression, and a high rate of obsolescence...’<sup>156</sup> This was art that was popular and designed for a mass audience and could be used to develop a television aesthetic in the 1960s.

In 1957 Richard Hamilton, a member of the Independent Group, who was to create the sleeve for the Beatles’ *White Album*, produced an inventory of the characteristics of Pop Art.<sup>157</sup> It was transient; expendable (easily forgotten); mass produced; aimed at youth; witty; sexy; gimmicky; glamorous; and referenced to big business because of its use of commercial trademarks, logos and advertising. The stress on individual pleasure and a freer choice of lifestyles came into conflict with existing traditional ideologies that emphasised historical continuity with a well-established system of morals and values. For Hamilton, ‘These “keepers of the flame” master a central (not too large) body of cultural knowledge, mediate in it, and pass it on intact...’<sup>158</sup> It was another member of the Independent Group, the critic, Lawrence Alloway, who concluded that mass production techniques applied to repeatable words, pictures, and music, was resulting in an expendable multitude of signs and symbols.<sup>159</sup> Pop Art was linked to the rise of the youth culture of the 1960s and the accelerated consumer culture of the post-war era that would form a central

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<sup>156</sup> John McHale, ‘The Expendable Icon’, in Mark Francis (ed), *POP* (London: Phaidon, 2005), pp.201-202.

<sup>157</sup> Richard Hamilton, *Collected Words 1953-1982* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 28.

<sup>158</sup> Lawrence Alloway, ‘The Long Front of Culture’, *Imagining the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 61-4.

<sup>159</sup> Lawrence Alloway, ‘The Long Front of Culture’, pp. 61-4.



appeal of the mid to late 1960s adventure series; although this claim has to be measured, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate in chapter four.

At the same time, it is important to make distinctions between popular and mass culture. Mass culture, including television, was repudiated as aesthetically and politically impoverished by such Frankfurt School theorists as Herbert Marcuse, and most powerfully, by Theodore Adorno in *The Culture Industry*.<sup>160</sup> These writings made clear the negative view of mass culture. Much later, the American critic Fredric Jameson lamented the erasure of the distinctions between elite culture, popular culture and mass culture which television has been blamed for. He explains: 'This is perhaps the most distressing development from an academic standpoint, which has traditionally held a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism, of schlock and kitsch, of *TV series* [my italics] and *Reader's Digest* culture, and in transmitting difficult and complex skills...' <sup>161</sup>

However, the Independent Group perceived popular culture to be of a complex nature because, crucially, it formed a part of the overall continuum of culture. To help illustrate this point, Howard Thomas, the Managing Director of ABC Television, writing in 1959, was to claim that 'fortunately for the art of the theatre' far from being distracted 'the television audience is exceptionally responsive to plays. So much so that Britain looks like becoming the centre of English-speaking dramatic art in television, just as in the theatre itself. Drama is also one aspect of television in which

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<sup>160</sup> Theodore W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 158-177.

<sup>161</sup> Fredric Jameson quoted in John Storey, *An Introductory Guide to Classical Theory and Popular Culture* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 166.

Britain is wresting the crown from America.’<sup>162</sup> The symbiosis of a mass medium with popular taste meant that Philip Purser was able to say ‘My impression is that the television audience is the most responsive and sensitive of any...it is not an intellectual audience when it comes to following abstract arguments. But it can accept extremely subtle shades of character and motivation.’<sup>163</sup> The perception that television enjoyed a conscious, appreciative and critical, but not necessarily intellectual, audience is important when understanding the production of popular television output during the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in unlikely places such as the adventure series, as we will see.

When independent television began in Britain in 1955, there had been quizzes with extravagant prizes, followed by the boom in Westerns brought about by the import of US telefilms, but home produced drama had remained in high demand. It was the catholic taste of the viewing public that had led Howard Thomas to suggest that ‘as the percentage of realistic and gloomy plays increased I suggested to [Sydney] Newman that our drama schedules need balancing with something more light-hearted and *sophisticated* [My italics].’<sup>164</sup> The outcome was *The Avengers*. It was a combination of the tastes of the audience and the need to produce accessible entertainment for a mass audience, ultimately the primary priority of any commercial broadcaster, and ABC Television’s policy of trying new programme ideas rather than import existing formats and copies of existing programmes, that would become the dominant modality in the originality of *The Avengers*.

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<sup>162</sup> Howard Thomas, ‘The Audience is the Thing’ in ABC (Corporate author), *The Armchair Theatre* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), pp. 9-15 (p. 9).

<sup>163</sup> Philip Purser, ‘Landscape of Drama’, *Contrast*, vol.1, no.1, Autumn 1961, pp. 11-20 (p. 12).

<sup>164</sup> Howard Thomas, *With an Independent Air: Encounters during a Lifetime of Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 189.

By experimenting with new writers, ABC-TV had sought to always try to provide something worth watching for the peak time *majority* audience and we will see later how this useful understanding can be applied to other producers and creative staff. In this way, a diverse dramatic form that was both entertaining and relied on regulated forms and serious-minded that relied on ideas to do with authorship and ‘creativity’ became possible; a liminal state between mass and popular culture, high and low art. By the 1960s, to echo Jim Collins, ‘...television, like the postmodern subject, must be conceived as a *site* – an intersection of multiple, conflicting cultural messages.’<sup>165</sup> In this way, the cultural specificity of a homogeneous national identity, and the values of public service which had first defined British television in the 1940s and 1950s, could become more eclectic and be affected by changes in the production and consumption of programmes onto film as the 1960s progressed. But it was in Britain that the distinction between a popular and high aesthetic on television became further bound up in the 1960s telefilm adventure series with the struggle between a populist, and classless, American television, and a much more class-based television with aspirations to art and seriousness.

At the same time, British adventure drama ran the risk of being labelled ‘old-fashioned’. In 1963, Lew Grade paid a flying visit to the US in the hope of selling to one of the major networks the series of the *Saint*, developed by Robert Baker and Monty Berman working together under the aegis of their production company, New World. NBC Vice Chairman, Mort Werner, however, hated it. When Grade showed

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<sup>165</sup> Jim Collins, ‘Television and Postmodernism’, in Robert C. Allen (ed.), *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 327-351 (p. 338).

it to ABC and CBS, they decried it as being ‘too English’ and ‘too old-fashioned’.<sup>166</sup> Baker and Berman, initially, had adhered to a fictional realism – the mode of realism that had made television drama ‘respectable’ in Britain<sup>167</sup> but was proving to be ‘old-fashioned’ in the US. Yet, by the time of the colour series (1966-67), ‘artistically it rose above the routine crime thriller’.<sup>168</sup> The initial appeal of the British adventure series was its superior writing. However, even here it ran the risk of being considered behind the times during a decade that was celebrated for its technical innovation and ‘with-it’ modernity such as the use of the jet plane for commercial travel, and, as we shall see, the representation on television of Harold Wilson’s ‘white heat of science and technology’.<sup>169</sup>

In Britain, the organisation of the television industry into a duopoly poised equally between a state and commercial broadcaster did not allow for the pursuit of market demographics in anything like the same way as it existed in the US. The resilience of the BBC-ITV duopoly in the 1960s and 1970s meant that British programmers were often catering for a mass (family) audience and offering universal, mixed programming. However, because of the growing international market of the 1950s, telefilms, such as the ‘swashbucklers’, were made in Britain that catered for first the juvenile market of the late 1950s, but as they grew in narrative sophistication, ceased solely to appeal to youngsters. From the early 1960s, the modern ‘with-it’

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<sup>166</sup> Michael Richardson, ‘The Stick Man’, *Primetime*, no.12, Spring/Summer 1987, pp. 4-7 (p. 5).

<sup>167</sup> Philip Purser was to say that ‘It was realism that made television drama respectable and it is realism that mostly keeps it that way...in particular, its extension to social strata other than the jukebox caff,’ in ABC (Corporate author) ‘What Comes After Realism?’, *The Armchair Theatre* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), pp. 59-74 (p. 59).

<sup>168</sup> Richardson, ‘The Stick Man’, p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> The phrase was used by Wilson during his address at the Labour Party conference in October, 1963. See Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good: a History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Little Brown, 2005), p. 691.

adventure series was produced that could incorporate themes of consumer culture and the not always mutually exclusive counter culture of the late 1960s.

## **Conclusion:**

### **The Action-adventure Text as Cultural Category**

This chapter has shown that an analysis of British television of this period suggests not only that it was culturally determined, but also culturally specific to notions of service and the threat of commodification rather than relying on any essentialist or abstracted quality of television. There was a variable nature of televisual signs depending on how they were used within a particular programme and a particular moment within the continuing search for a television aesthetic that dominated critical thinking about television in the period under observation. The following chapters will demonstrate that the value of signs to do with the spy - conspicuous consumption, modernity and obsolescence and other dominant discourses - cannot be explained in reference to one logic, either textual, subjectivity or technological, but is also channel and company sensitive. By focusing on the dynamics of the institution of three key players producing filmed entertainment for the British ITV channel – ATV/ITC, ABC-TV and Thames/Euston Films - it is possible to determine these shifting values and understand the interconnectedness of the television text, the action-adventure series *and* the economic/technical dimensions of the adventure series. In this way, an analysis becomes possible not as a method that addresses only a specific television series or genre on television, but a specific example of television form as a category of social discourse between industries (the personnel within them) and ‘public opinion’ including regulatory bodies, the ITA/IBA, as well as television audiences.

For all these reasons, the use of the conventions of filmed entertainment in television would differ in key aspects from its use in the cinema in the 1960s and 1970s. The degree and types of difference represented television's distinct form of address to a domestic audience that made specific demands on film technology drawing particular attention to television's intimacy through reference to its small, low-definition screen. However, the centrality of the display of visual style in the British adventure series of the 1960s and its export to the transatlantic market constructs a more complex picture than an aesthetic form subsumed into the flow of everyday television. Rather than either a televisual flow, or the separate text with a single narrative arc as might be found at the cinema, the filmed adventure series would be used to create a set of programmes that used a dialectic between 'low' and 'high' culture, the formulaic and the experimental.

## **2. Institution: The Telefilm Adventure Series and New Markets**

### **Introduction:**

This chapter examines the effect of the industrialisation of television as it catered for the new mass audience and the invention of the *telefilm* as a form and mode specific to British television after its arrival from the US in the 1950s. It examines how the telefilm was modified by the cultural and institutional requirements of British television that sought to find markers of quality within the notion of a class-based drama.

Television drama in the UK had, since its inception, been conceived primarily in terms of the single play that was either live or, from 1947, telerecorded. However, the extension of transmission hours after 1955, which resulted from the competition between the BBC and new ITV companies, led to a massive growth of television drama that no longer used the mode and style of 'live theatre'. The enormous output of television and the numbers of sets in households meant that drama could reach a television audience that was unprecedented in its size.

The industrial scale of television allowed for skilled entrepreneurs from the worlds of theatrical variety and 'B' movies to find employment and make programmes, including the adventure series, that were not only targeted at markets within Britain, but in the US. Therefore, the chapter examines how the adventure series was modified by the need to appeal to a variegated audience that could traverse national boundaries. A history of the British telefilm can also demonstrate the differing attitudes to the possibility of transatlantic entertainment, which was resisted by institutions in Britain and, to a degree, by programme makers and audiences.

## The Search for Television's Form and Popular Taste

From being a nine inch 'goggle box' in the 1940s, by the mid 1950s TV screens had expanded to 20 and more inches.<sup>170</sup> Technical limitations in the form of a lack of recording and cameras that had a fixed focus were also being resolved. Nigel Kneale has written about the swift development of television technology that affected the three *Quatermass* series on BBC television. The first series was shot live in 1953 and used pre-war cameras, tracking on bicycle wheels, that had fixed lenses and a viewfinder that offered an image that was upside down and which, because of its general ineffectiveness, was referred to as a 'watch-the-birdie' viewfinder.<sup>171</sup> By 1955, and the second series of *Quatermass*, there was a well-equipped studio and filmed inserts were possible. Finally, when the third series was produced in 1958-59, there was console lighting to control multiple lights at once, and recording using videotape.<sup>172</sup>

What was being discovered early on, according to Kneale, was that there was no single technique, no purist method which was 'natural' to television. Kneale, who adopts a slightly polemic tone in his article, mentions how 'one enthusiastic producer made a cult of it [intimacy].'<sup>173</sup> One solution to the problem of television's form appeared in a 1960 memo from the BBC's central Script Department. It suggested to potential writers for television that 'two of the medium's happiest assets are the camera's mobility and its inquisitiveness' and cautioned, 'although you may have an audience of many millions, it is not (as in the theatre and cinema) a mass audience. It

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<sup>170</sup> A 20 inch television from Ferranti cost 95 guineas in 1955. *TV Times*, 15- 21 October 1955, p. 8.

<sup>171</sup> Nigel Kneale, 'Not Quite So Intimate', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 28, no. 2, Spring 1959, pp. 86-88 (p. 86).

<sup>172</sup> Kneale, 'Not Quite So Intimate', p. 86.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.



is largely composed of individuals sitting in their own homes'.<sup>174</sup> Janet Thumim has suggested that the combination of a mobile 'inquisitive' camera and the domestic context for viewing the small screen continued to privilege the medium and close-up shot.<sup>175</sup> However, Kneale, writing in 1959, makes clear that in his opinion, television had no one technique and increasing technical resources could only create a style that was appropriate to a particular piece of drama.

The search for a suitable aesthetic and the lack of a satisfactory answer opened the possibility that television did not decisively impose itself upon different dramatic forms. Stuart Hall, one of the founding figures of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, was to argue in the 1970s that what made television of the time distinctive was the 'relatively low level of the type of transformation which [it] operates on the great bulk of its contents...and the very high proportion of cases in which the raw material is itself the content of another medium.'<sup>176</sup> According to these ideas, it used up, exhausted, the contents of other media and of everyday life. Hall approached television as a British Cultural Theorist and his analysis was largely of the non-commercial British system. As we have seen, it is this 'public service' experience that has shaped the theoretical articulation of the relation of text and culture in Britain not only by Hall but other theoreticians.

If, according to Hall, the form on TV was fixed because older forms were untransformed by television, Thumim has argued that it could be transformed by an

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<sup>174</sup> 'Notes on Writing Plays', memo, BBC, WAC 16/62/3, 1 April 1960, quoted in Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women and the Box* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 123.

<sup>175</sup> Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture*, p. 123.

<sup>176</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Television and Culture', *Sight and Sound*, vol.45, no.4, Autumn 1976, pp. 246-252 (p. 247).

audience composed of individuals in their own homes. She has made a case that television form in this period can best be understood by examining its address to its audience, particularly the use of scheduling patterns that created an order and form that was specific to television.<sup>177</sup>

The assumed main form of the domestic audience would be the family in which the father was working and the mother was running the home with two children of school age. According to John Ellis, writing in the early 1990s, this particular ideological notion of the nuclear family meant that, because of the multiple distractions which this scenario could offer, broadcast TV could not assume the same level of attention from its viewers that cinema could from its spectators.<sup>178</sup> Ellis regarded scheduling as important because it reinforced this presumption about the audience. It was the means by which a day's broadcasting was arranged so that particular programmes coincided with a domestic routine in the life of the family; the breadwinner (father) returning from work at 5:45 pm and so on. This general domestic vision, it can be argued, therefore determined the balance of types of programmes across the evening, with a games show, situation comedy, and television drama series gravitating towards the mid-evening peak hours when the nuclear family was expected to be watching and giving TV their undivided or concentrated attention. To aid a more concentrated form of viewing, an episode of *The Avengers* in 1965 was transmitted at 9.05 pm on Friday after the comedy of *The Arthur Haynes Show* at 8.20 and before *Armchair Theatre* at 10.05, although by 1967 *The Avengers* was

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<sup>177</sup> Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture*, pp. 25-37.

<sup>178</sup> Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 115.

transmitted at 8.00 in the evening on Saturday, suggesting over time, the show became more aimed at a family audience with younger members in it.

Despite the erosion of generic boundaries, as has been shown in chapter one, and the forward momentum of the schedule, a significant part of the audience would be likely to be differentiating between the separate items on the channel(s) they were watching. The bounds of distinction remained important, and the use of the telefilm with its clear use of generic boundaries and deployment of visual codes (chapter three) was an important part in separating out individual texts. Nevertheless, Caughie explains that because of the centrality of categorisation to television, production and consumption are regulated by repetition if modulated by acceptable difference.<sup>179</sup> The television series was an ideal form for the rationalised mass production of television narratives and a different episode of a series by the mid to late 1950s would be broadcast at the same time every week on the schedules.<sup>180</sup> Johnson explains that the 25 and 50 minute episodes were not only a key requirement for the domestic schedule, but also the only acceptable lengths for export in the 1960s.<sup>181</sup>

The series and the serial were specific forms of narration that relied on scheduling. The serial implied some narrative progression, but the series usually did not. Each week the characters in an adventure series would be expected to encounter a new situation which had no permanent effect on them, so that they often remained the same from week to week. Despite this difference, the series and serial generated

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<sup>179</sup> John Caughie, 'Adorno's Reproach: Repetition, Difference and Television Genre', *Screen*, vol.32, no.2, Summer 1991, pp. 127-153 (p. 132). Caughie discusses difference not to mean simply variation, but the negation of the rationality of capitalist production and bourgeois ideology as first proposed by Adorno and Horkheimer.

<sup>180</sup> However, the first *Quatermass* series had been broadcast at different times. See Johnson, *Telefantasy*, p. 31.

<sup>181</sup> Johnson, *Telefantasy*, p. 44.

many segments from basic thematic material which could be repeated, avoiding a single narrative arc, and allowing for longevity. The act of viewing such drama was made routine by scheduling and the development of scheduling due to ideas of the centrality of the family led to an assumption that drama would be made for a mass audience.

Nevertheless, a totalising argument of the 'mass' audience avoids the more obvious changes in taste and fashion of individuals sitting at home. Philip Purser, the TV critic of the *News Chronicle*, recognised this seemingly contradictory attitude when he observed:

The question that matters is whether proper discrimination and genuine creativity can survive amid such a vast supply and demand. Can Jacques Gillies [a thriller TV dramatist] outlast *The Avengers*?...The public otherwise seems to be extraordinarily catholic in its taste, and also innocent in that it has few preconceived likes and dislikes...The ratings are not much more helpful. A good play on ITV will usually make the Top Ten, but then *Wagon Train*, a lousy Western, is there every week.<sup>182</sup>

The catholic taste of the public was voracious and would later lead Leslie Charteris, the original author of *The Saint* books, to comment that 'Television is a monster, like a great big garbage disposal, which it frequently is, and it can eat up a lifetime's output in a matter of seasons.'<sup>183</sup> Yet ironically, Charteris discovered for these reasons that programme makers [the makers of *The Saint*] became 'more critical of their new scripts than I had been of mine.'<sup>184</sup> The attempt by those working in television to lift a popular series out of the 'television flow', as well as contribute to it, had already been noticed by the ITA:

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<sup>182</sup> Philip Purser, 'Landscape of TV Drama', *Contrast*, vol.1, no.1, Autumn 1961, pp. 11-20 (p. 12).

<sup>183</sup> Roy Moseley, *Roger Moore: a Biography* (London: New English Library, 1985), p. 124.

<sup>184</sup> Moseley, *Roger Moore: a Biography*, p. 124.

It is sometimes said that most people wish to be entertained by television, not informed or educated. This remark misses the point. People wish to be interested by television: that means if a programme of any kind excites their interest and holds their attention, they will watch it undistractedly whether it is a programme making demands on their understanding or a variety show. Analysers like to do their sums in terms of programme classes. The viewer divides programmes into two groups: the interesting and the boring.<sup>185</sup>

Underlying this continuing tension, there was an acute awareness of the importance of securing audiences for popular drama by both the BBC and ITV. But it was ITV that had to attract large audiences in order to continue to receive advertising revenue and survive. The pursuit of large, prime-time audiences meant a new dramatic form appeared on television from the mid 1950s and the onset of commercial TV – the telefilm. The origins and development of the telefilm and its relationship to low and medium budget genre film-making are examined later in this chapter.

### **The Internationality of British Television Adventure Drama**

When the BBC had re-opened its television services after the War in 1946, ‘they virtually perpetuated a method of transmission on 405 lines, with the acquiescence of the Labour Government of the day. Excepting for BBC2 [it used 625 lines], British television has stayed on that standard like a truck on a narrow gauge railway.’<sup>186</sup> The problem was the USA and Japan had adopted a technical standard of 525 lines and Europe had adopted 625 lines. This made it technically difficult and costly to make

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<sup>185</sup> ITA, ‘The Development of “Serious” Programming’, *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1961-62, p. 13.

<sup>186</sup> Baynham Honri, ‘Make Sure We Sell Our Share of Packages in the TV Supermarket’, *Production Review*, supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 November 1964, p. 11.

transfers from 405 lines to other video standards that could be exported. One unforeseen consequence of a 'hurried' re-opening of television services in 1946 would be that 16mm or 35mm film would have to be used if British programmes were to be exported. 'For exporting taped TV programmes...transfers had to be made to film...', wrote one commentator, although, 'The quality of the results were (and still are) as unpredictable as the charms of trout fishing and women.'<sup>187</sup> Unlike a programme on video, a series that had been filmed was to have clear export potential.

By the 1960s the range of American TV's overseas activities had begun to parallel its domestic operations. A 1964 estimate of the annual revenues of programme production and syndication, equipment and sales, management and technical sales, and advertising sales from these overseas operations was \$100 million with a yearly increase of 15-20 percent.<sup>188</sup> American TV products were setting the tone for television programming throughout the world in much the same way that Hollywood had for motion pictures since the 1920s. The US was leading all other countries combined twice over as a programme exporter and by 1964 telefilm sales alone had expanded to an estimated \$70 million spread over 80 countries.<sup>189</sup> Overseas sales accounted for 60 percent of all US telefilm syndication and represented the difference between profit and loss for the entire US industry.<sup>190</sup>

Philip Purser, writing in *Contrast*, had identified that of the 35 hours of drama a week on ITV/BBC in 1961, on average, 15 were taken up by old films and what he

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<sup>187</sup> Honri, 'Make Sure We Sell Our Share of Packages in the TV Supermarket', p. 11.

<sup>188</sup> Wilson P. Dizard. 'The Screen Ambassadors', *Contrast*, vol.4, no.1, Winter 1964-65, pp. 24-26 (p. 24).

<sup>189</sup> Dizard. 'The Screen Ambassadors', p. 24.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p.24.

termed 'TV moviettes'.<sup>191</sup> Meanwhile, British producers were advancing from 'swashbuckling' dramas such as *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot* and *The Buccaneers* in 1956-57 to more ambitious projects such as *Danger Man* by the early 1960s. However, Purser's attitude to the shot-on-film entertainment series was clear. After citing the names of the shows, he concluded 'There doesn't seem much point in further analysis...'<sup>192</sup> Two sentences are given to the 'TV moviette'; and the rest of his lengthy article in *Contrast* (nine pages long) is used to discuss the merits of television drama to the exclusion of any further mention of the new telefilms. Yet by 1962, there were each week 35 series and serials, including telefilms, on BBC TV and about 40 on ITV which had become a large proportion of the 50 to 60 hours that British broadcasters were permitted to broadcast.<sup>193</sup>

Much of the argument in Britain to do with the American dominance of telefilms, that helps to explain Philip Purser's blunt refusal to discuss them and their effect on broadcasting, was centred around whether standards in drama had fallen because of the Americans and how much 'bad television' there was on 'the box'. However, there was an acknowledgement that television did need telefilms because they were audience pleasers and television, partly because it was still mainly live, was an expensive business.<sup>194</sup> The cost of the rights to a telefilm to be shown in the UK was between £1,500 and £2,500.<sup>195</sup> However, the cost of a 'live' one hour play would

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<sup>191</sup> Purser, 'Landscape of TV Drama', p. 14. I have interpreted the term 'moviette' to mean the telefilm.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>193</sup> Cecil McGivern, 'Let's Get it Moving Again', *Contrast*, vol.1, no.3, Spring 1962, pp. 161-167 (p. 166).

<sup>194</sup> One of the main reasons cited in the early 1960s for the decision to diversify into film was the rising cost of live television, which was described as 'crippling'. See Tony Gruner, 'The Signs Are Right for a Big Rise in TV Film Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 July 1964, p. 14.

<sup>195</sup> Howard Thomas, *The Truth about Television* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), p. 187.

be between £4,000 and £5,000.<sup>196</sup> At the same time, the production cost of a British telefilm would usually be £10,000.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, imported, relatively cheap telefilms would permit scarce resources to be invested into more valuable domestic shows. They were, at worst, a necessary evil and, at best, a guilty pleasure. The argument was, therefore, not whether they should be shown, but just how many?<sup>198</sup>

However, the situation in Britain was different from America because, for institutions and producers at the time, television's responsibility had to be balanced between 'giving the public what it wants' and the ideal of 'public service': a desire that Ien Ang would later summarise as giving the public what it needs.<sup>199</sup> For example, Huw Wheldon at this time was striving to create on *Monitor* (1958-1965), the BBC's arts programme, a generation of liberal arts enthusiasts as he tried to form the audience's tastes and guide their cultural development, introducing them to both the sacred and the profane: Rousseau and [Ken] Russell.<sup>200</sup> It permitted talented men such as Wheldon to admonish people to do the right thing accompanied by a suspicion of creeping 'Americanisation'.

Nevertheless, the market in Britain had been important to American telefilm producers in the 1950s. For example, ITV had relied on crime thrillers such as *Dragnet* (1951-59) and other popular US programmes in the 1950s to strengthen the audience appeal of its own operations in television. However, the independent television companies were restricted after the Television Act, 1954, to importing

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<sup>196</sup> Thomas, *The Truth about Television*, p. 187.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187. A telefilm could, of course, be exported and continue to make money unlike a live or videotaped series.

<sup>198</sup> McGivern, 'Let's Get it Moving Again', p. 163.

<sup>199</sup> Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 40.

<sup>200</sup> Nevertheless, Russell would make *Pop Goes the Easel* (1962) for *Monitor*, one of the first programmes about Pop Art which had sought to collapse the distinction between high and low art.



foreign programmes that were equivalent to 14 percent of their total programming time. The original Act had required the Independent Television Authority to satisfy itself so far as possible that ‘proper proportions of the recorded and other material included in the programme are of British origin and British performance.’<sup>201</sup> The prices offered by ITV for the American telefilms were much higher than the BBC’s low rates and they had been acquired by the ITV companies as a key method of building up audiences as they sought to establish themselves in this formative period.<sup>202</sup> This had been foreseen by the legislators of the Television Act, and the initial ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ was to prevent ITV acquiring a monopoly of the cream of American imports. In the context of 50 hours of broadcasting a week when the legislation had been framed, a 14 percent limit would mean that there was one hour a day of foreign film and this restriction was enforced throughout the 1960s when there were about 65-70 hours of programmes every week.<sup>203</sup> Restrictions on transmission hours were lifted in January 1972, but the limit of 14% remained.<sup>204</sup>

The BBC had voluntarily decided to follow suit and restricted the number of hours devoted to programmes from abroad although, by the late 1960s, one commentator was able to say that ‘regrettably, the BBC still relies on America for its filmed series.’<sup>205</sup> The importance of the foreign film and/or filmed entertainment to the BBC can be seen more clearly by examining how the BBC used its freedom to schedule its programmes. The BBC could divide its eight hours of imported material

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<sup>201</sup> ITA, ‘Use of Foreign Material in the Programmes’, *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1955-56, p. 17.

<sup>202</sup> Howard Thomas, *The Truth about Television* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), p. 185.

<sup>203</sup> ITA, ‘Balance of Output’, *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1967-68, p. 7.

<sup>204</sup> IBA, ‘Programme Sources’, *Television and Radio Handbook*, (London: Independent Broadcasting Authority, 1978), p. 13.

<sup>205</sup> John K. Newnham, ‘Television’s Place in Film Production’, *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.34, Winter 1968-69, pp. 4-6 (p. 4).

throughout the week as it saw fit; unlike the ITV weekday companies which had to spread 5.75 hours over five days, and the weekend companies, 2.25 hours over two days.<sup>206</sup> The severe competition from the weekend companies, however, meant that the BBC decided to concentrate more than half its quota of foreign films, four to five hours, at the weekend to maximise its audience against a competitor limited to 2.25 hours; arguably giving the BBC an unfair advantage in the battle for viewers. The battle lines for viewers were, in the late 1950s, already being established between ITV and the BBC and the telefilm assumed an important place in the arsenals of both organisations.

One solution to the problem faced by ITV of being restricted to only one hour every day of imported telefilms was found when the independent companies began to produce their own telefilms. It was only as the number and types of British drama being produced increased that the number of American telefilms in the top ten list of 'most watched programmes', particularly on ITV, diminished rapidly in the 1960s. America, which had possessed a monopoly of the shot-on-film television series in Britain, was being challenged by ITV which, as early as the mid 1950s, was producing British made shows such as *Colonel March of Scotland Yard* (1955) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. This relegated to second place many of the American series and, in turn, British telefilms (mostly of the 'adventure' variety), would secure world-wide sales by the 1960s.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Thomas, *The Truth about Television*, p. 186.

<sup>207</sup> The success of this economic strategy led to two outcomes. First, the development in Britain of a thriving export industry in television films whose revenue from overseas sales exceeded the dollar cost of American imports. Second, by the 1960s, programmes continued to be predominantly of British origin. Material imported from foreign countries occupied 13.1% of total transmission time over the whole ITV network in 1967. See the ITA, *Annual Report*, 1966-67, p. 16.

However, by 1963, the formula for telefilm entertainment that ITV had pioneered in the earlier action-adventure series was under attack. Unfortunately, a large proportion of Britain's overseas customers were in the advertising strait-jacket: 'series of this kind must be designed to support a year's [US] advertising campaign...Such programmes are shown for entertainment in Britain, but in America they are primarily vehicles for advertising,' explained Gerald Beadle, the Director of Television at the BBC.<sup>208</sup> In this way, the requirements of American television were 'stereotyped to series of 39 episodes of precise length with natural breaks.'<sup>209</sup> In the US, a series would be either 26 or 39 episodes or a multiple of thirteen. This had sprung from the American practice of dividing the television year into two seasons, the 13 week summer season and the rest of the year. During the summer season, when audiences declined, ratings used to fall, and advertisement revenue would also diminish, so that 'replacement' shows of smaller budgets would be put on, or a telefilm series would be repeated. From the mid 1960s, competition between the three US networks reduced the length of runs of series and it became more common practice to make 26 episodes in a series.

The concern with a show like *Danger Man* was that it had been made to fit the requirements of the (American) commercial sponsor who needed a programme a week at a fixed time for nine months. The first *Danger Man* series was made in 1960-61 with 39 episodes. British programming, which was to become increasingly dependent on the export market to America, would henceforth, it was feared, experience a decline in 'quality'. Yet the history of a popular action show such as

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<sup>208</sup> Gerald Beadle, *Television: a Critical Review* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 124. Beadle was Director of BBC Television from 1956-61.

<sup>209</sup> Beadle, *Television: a Critical Review*, p. 127.

*The Avengers* demonstrates that a show valued for its specific British content could be successful and at the same time different from a foreign produced series while using all the production values normally associated with a US telefilm series. When *The Avengers* was shot on film for the first time in 1964, Julian Wintle, the show's producer, 1964-67, 'decided that if the series was to break into the American market...it should, like *The Human Jungle* [his previous telefilms series], be essentially English to avoid competition.'<sup>210</sup> In fact, *The Avengers* was only really successful when it was able to differentiate itself from an American series, but, according to Patrick Macnee, experienced a slow decline after 1966 because it was aimed too much at the Americans.<sup>211</sup> Nevertheless, in 1967, the ITA would claim that 'the "international" series must, in its attempt to be universally acceptable, lose some of the character of the series produced for the home audience alone; but series like *The Avengers* have shown that it is possible to achieve success overseas without losing the native savour.'<sup>212</sup>

By the mid 1960s, the erosion of the boundaries between dramatic forms which had occurred much earlier in Light Entertainment was affecting even a filmed dramatic series if it was not too serious. The adventure series which had originally occupied a marginal space in television's output and had been designed primarily for a juvenile audience no longer fitted pre-conceived ideas of the genre in the 1960s as it

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<sup>210</sup> Anne Francis, *Julian Wintle: a Memoir* (London: Dukeswood, 1985), p. 84.

<sup>211</sup> Patrick Macnee was to say: 'In the early days of the series...Steed and his associates had been apparently freelance. Now, however, the new [American] owners of the series felt that Steed's relationship with the Powers That Be needed to be formalised. They started doing all sorts of things, such as bringing in the character of Mother as Steed's boss, and they ruined the show...In addition, Steed's new partner Tara King was explicitly a fellow agent, rather than an amateur recruited by Steed as his previous partners had been. The show completely lost its character...' Quoted in John Porter, 'The Avengers', *Starburst*, vol. 6, no.6, February 1994, pp. 38-42 (p. 41).

<sup>212</sup> ITA, 'Drama Series and Serials', *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1966-67, p. 13.

became increasingly sophisticated and able to appeal to a primetime audience i.e. between the hours of 7pm and 10pm. Nevertheless, the narrative conventions and character types remained relatively rigid. On ITV the adventure series developed what John Bryce, the producer of *The Avengers*, was to call 'formula art'. Each episode had to conform to particular requirements: the formula meant that every week, right had to be opposed by wrong; the hero had to be menaced; violence had to be involved (usually with a murder); this was followed by a chase, a battle to create tension and an eventual climax.<sup>213</sup> It was later expressed by another commentator of the time that:

It might be said that the TV series lack the artistic prestige of feature films, but this is no more a criticism than to say that the *Daily Mirror* is inferior to *The Times* because it has a mass appeal or that beer is an inferior drink to champagne because most people consume it. All are fulfilling vital functions.<sup>214</sup>

The breaking down of dramatic boundaries in TV due to the growth of the schedule from the mid 1950s and the increasingly voracious demand for all forms of drama meant that the sheer quantity of scripts required presented problems of supply. Before the late 1950s it had been nearly impossible to make a living writing for television.<sup>215</sup> However, the growing popularity of television and the need for more original writing meant that by the early 1960s more and more writers were being attracted to write for an adventure show such as *Robin Hood* whose payment was

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<sup>213</sup> John Bryce, 'Producer of *The Avengers*, ABC TV', *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.16, Summer 1964, pp. 6-8.

<sup>214</sup> John K. Newnham, 'Television's Place in Film Production', *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.34, Winter 1968-69, pp. 4-6 (p. 5).

<sup>215</sup> Jay Nelson Tuck, 'British TV Has the Advantage', *TV Times*, 21 October 1955, p. 14. Tuck makes this point that the prices the BBC pays for scripts made it impossible for a playwright to live on the proceeds of TV plays alone.

£385 per script and for the action thriller, *The Third Man*, whose payment was £410.<sup>216</sup> By 1963, the payment for an episode of *The Avengers* was reported to be £400.<sup>217</sup> This was an enormous amount of money at a time when the average annual salary was in the region of £600.<sup>218</sup> On the other hand, payment to a writer did not follow domestic popularity. A writer for a popular domestic show such as *Coronation Street* which received audiences of 20-25 million<sup>219</sup> would be paid £125.<sup>220</sup> But in fact, a writer would be paid much more for an episode of *The Avengers*. One reason for this was because a broadcaster bought the rights to a film outright, whereas it only bought the first rights for a television play. Consequently, an episode of *Robin Hood* or *Sir Francis Drake* (1961-62) could be repeated in Britain and represented a very cheap way of filling half-an-hour of screen time.

Thus the value of a programme to British broadcasters depended to some extent on whether it had been recorded on video (which replaced telerecording) or film. The fact that all televisual material consisted of images and sound did not mean that it was of the same 'quality'. For example, Lew Grade's company, ITC (Incorporated Television Company), took the attitude that its filmed shows should be aimed at the export transatlantic market, which was markedly different to the BBC's attitude towards its videotaped programmes at the time.<sup>221</sup> Some of this difference can be traced to two related consequences of recording programmes: one aesthetic,

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<sup>216</sup> Peter Black, 'A Fair Price', *Contrast*, vol.3, no.2, Winter 1963, pp. 84-87 (p. 85).

<sup>217</sup> Black, 'A Fair Price', p. 85.

<sup>218</sup> House of Commons, 'A Century of Change: Trends in UK Statistics' <<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp99/rp99-111.pdf>> [accessed June 2011].

<sup>219</sup> Anon, 'Cyclops', *Television Mail*, 15 December 1967, pp. 30-31 (p. 30).

<sup>220</sup> Black, 'A Fair Price', p. 85.

<sup>221</sup> Lewis Chester, *The Life of Lew Grade* (London: Aurum Press, 2010), p. 137.

and the other economic. The transformation of television broadcasts from mere ephemera into physical objects meant they could be used over and over again to recoup the cost of producing them.

Men such as Bryce and Grade would have also been aware of the parliamentary discussion of broadcasters' output throughout the 1950s, culminating in the Pilkington Report (1962) that, according to Cathy Johnson, would shape some of the most popular action-adventure shows of the 1960s including *The Prisoner* (1967-68), and begin a debate about television outside the institutions themselves.<sup>222</sup> Yet, the opposition to the filmed series and its Americanised values of entertainment was not straightforward or entirely accepted. Lord Hill, who was appointed Chairman of the Independent Television Authority in 1963, dismissed Pilkington:

Undeniably the Pilkington Committee had been brutal in its criticisms, so brutal in fact that the Government, sensing that the BBC could not be so white nor ITV so black as Pilkington asserted, had rejected its main recommendations.<sup>223</sup>

Others, at the time, suggested that Pilkington had not claimed that there were two alternative philosophies of broadcasting: to give the public what they wanted or to give the public what was good for them.<sup>224</sup> In the Committee's view, this attitude would be patronising and arrogant and the report argued that 'No one can say he is giving the public what it wants, unless the public knows the whole range of possibilities which television can offer and, from this range, chooses what it wants to

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<sup>222</sup> Cathy Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), pp. 49-51.

<sup>223</sup> Lord Hill quoted in Howard Thomas, *With an Independent Air: Encounters during a Lifetime of Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 196.

<sup>224</sup> Sir Gerald Beadle, *Television: a Critical Review* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 148.

see. For a choice is only free if the field of choice is not unnecessarily restricted.'<sup>225</sup>

But this attests to a continued desire of using television as an opportunity to communicate to an audience of citizens rather than consumers.

Here then were some of the competing aesthetic and economic tensions that caused the formative decade of 1955-65, after the launch of ITV, to be characterised in British television by speculative experiments with dramatic programme forms and audience address that had been barely imagined during the BBC monopoly. Both ITV and the BBC, and their audiences, were becoming alert to the uncharted territory that the rapid, almost vertiginous, growth of TV was creating. Against this background the British telefilm was produced.

### **Early Telefilm and 'Technical Excellence'**

An early report on the use of significant amounts of film on American television appeared in a *Sight and Sound* article in 1954, written by Philip Mackie, and underlined the early interest in Britain of the growing popularity of the use of film on US television:

A steady progression is going on. More TV shows are being put on film; the difference in production costs is negligible, the general convenience is greater, the fear of fluffs and errors is eliminated, and the final product can be shown and re-shown without any loss of quality in all the different time zones of the United States. So more and more TV production is moving from New York to Hollywood...<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> 'The Purposes of Broadcasting', *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, 1960 (Pilkington Report)* (London: HMSO, 1962), paragraph 46, p.17.

<sup>226</sup> Philip Mackie, 'Six Hundred Hours a Week', *Sight and Sound*, vol.24, no.1, July-September 1954, pp. 45-48 (p.48).



Mackie was able to distinguish between two styles of TV film entertainment. The most important school of producers ‘make their films look like films, with chases and running fights shot against location exteriors’.<sup>227</sup> Such early telefilms would experience a large rise in production and the mid 1950s saw a big expansion of the filmed crime and Western series on American TV. In Britain, with the launching of ITV, the economic possibilities of using film for television drama were exploited. ITC’s swashbuckling adventure telefilms were an early example, which constituted a profitable exportable commodity; its British swashbuckling competing against the American Western/crime series.

There had been an interesting change in American television programming in the late 1950s and early 1960s. For a long time the nucleus of the American schedules had been the Western and the police/private eye crime series, and it was difficult for British production to compete with these genres because ‘the American scene lends itself so much more naturally to the strong crime/detective series’.<sup>228</sup> By the mid 1950s, the half-hour westerns ‘had had their heyday and the network programmes were tightly packed with half-hour situation comedies or “oaters” as *Variety* called them’.<sup>229</sup> However, while NBC and CBS continued to produce sitcoms, ABC began to make adventure films to entice audiences from the other two networks.<sup>230</sup> ABC commissioned one hour westerns, such as *Cheyenne*, from studios like Warner Brothers and expanded other half-hour series to a full hour. Yet, the

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<sup>227</sup> Mackie, ‘Six Hundred Hours a Week’, p.48

<sup>228</sup> Robert Norris, ‘There’s No Turning Back’, *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.23, Spring 1966, pp. 14-16 (p. 14).

<sup>229</sup> Howard Thomas, *The Truth about Television* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), p. 184. Although, the word ‘oaters’ is usually used to mean the Western.

<sup>230</sup> Thomas, *The Truth about Television*, p. 184.

success of James Bond and the secret agent in the early 1960s meant that, after the swashbuckler and costume action-adventure programme, Britain once more had the opportunity of making a series that was broadly within the adventure genre, but could remain popular with audiences in America. *Danger Man* and *The Avengers* were shows that would be more in touch with the zeitgeist of the 1960s, a decade fascinated by technology and electronic gadgetry, and which were made to satisfy the new demand.

One consequence of the rapid rise of telefilms in both countries from the mid 1950s had been the decline of the 'B' picture and the other supporting features that had been included in a cinema programme. In Britain, the future for the second feature in the early 1950s had already been seen as a revamping of the half-hour featurette, which could neatly slot into a supporting role on a longer first feature, and might go onto a second life on TV. The 'B' picture, considered *Today's Cinema*, was under threat of disappearing, because it needed 'perking up'.<sup>231</sup> The use of film for television increasingly reflected the hope that, somehow, the telefilm could fill the empty space that the British movie industry, especially 'B' movies, had vacated at the studios. One aspect of the television adventure programme was that, as a mode, it might also exist as a low-budget form of feature film-making and come to replace 'B' movies; for example, shows such as *Tales of Edgar Wallace* (1960-64), which had migrated from the cinema to television. Conversely, another series, *Fabian of the Yard* (1954-56), the first one in Britain to be entirely filmed, would have some of its

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<sup>231</sup> Anon, 'Production', *Today's Cinema*, 18 April 1955, p. 6.

30 episodes, originally made for BBC TV, re-edited to produce two films for the cinema in 1954 -55.<sup>232</sup>

Soon, as the launch for ITV became imminent, many of the production studios that had previously been used to film 'B' pictures in the UK were bought by television companies. Both Teddington (bought by ABC-TV) and Wembley (Associated Rediffusion) had been added by New Year 1955 to the list of studios making only television features and advertisements.<sup>233</sup> By then, only three studios remained that were consistently available for modest independent productions: Beaconsfield, Merton Park and Nettlefold, with six stages in all.

The producer who, yesterday, was making second features that, in some situations, could get by on a double feature bill, has just about had it. Not so much because the exhibitors will not take it any more, but because there is not the studio space in which to make such films. Nowadays, you either make first features or you try to find the space to make half-hour films for television.<sup>234</sup>

In February 1955, Edward J. and Harry Lee Danzinger, American independents who came from New York, lost their tenancy at MGM Elstree and in 1956 opened the New Elstree Studios. The New Elstree Studios at Borehamwood would function as a production studio both for 'B' pictures and television programmes, and realised Herbert Yates' prediction that much of the lower reaches and cheaper type of cinema would have to work with television.<sup>235</sup> It was here that

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<sup>232</sup> Steve Chibnall and Brian McFarlane, *The British 'B' Film* (London: British Film Institute, 2009), p. 228. The figure for the number of episodes comes from the *BFI Screenonline*. Susan Sydney-Smith, 'Fabian of the Yard (1954-56)', *BFI Screenonline* <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1010225/>> [accessed October, 2010].

<sup>233</sup> Anon, 'Production', *Today's Cinema*, 24 January 1955, p. 3.

<sup>234</sup> Anon, 'Production', *Today's Cinema*, 14 February 1955, p. 7.

<sup>235</sup> Anon, 'Republic to Make Television Films', *Today's Cinema*, 8 September 1953, p. 3. Herbert Yates was President of Republic Pictures and had attempted a brief revival of 'B' movies in Britain before accepting the need to make telefilms. He was not associated with the Danzingers.

the Danzingers made one of the earliest crime series on TV; *Saber of London* (1954-59). Other series, such as *The Man from Interpol* (1960), made as half-hour films, were to follow. Schedules were tight; two episodes a week were expected, unlike the usual five days to film a thirty-minute episode. The speed of production became faster and faster, with which a parallel can be drawn to the tight schedules of recording *Armchair Theatre* in the television studio. Managing Director for the Danzingers, Eric Blackmore, did his best to present speed as a virtue:

At New Elstree we can perhaps compare our work with lightning sketches of a good artist who, capable of creating masterpieces, can, with adjustments, bring his talent to the production of quick satisfactory work without shedding his inspiration...Operating at speed means every facility or service being readily available.<sup>236</sup>

And compare the method of making early telefilms with making *Armchair Theatre*:

...Because we were [under] that pressure, that challenge, we hardly ever had any time: I mean even when we made mistakes, and we made them, it didn't rock the boat. We didn't have any real time to think about yesterday's [episode]...If one [episode] was not doing its job, or whatever, there were three others at least in production...I always used to think it is factory-like, but ABC...I just regarded as being the *best* factory that there was in television at that time in this country.<sup>237</sup>

The speed of production meant that, besides their TV series, the Danzingers were able to release a very high volume of 'B' movies; almost all between sixty and seventy minutes, for between £15,000 to £17,500 each.<sup>238</sup> Vincent Ball recalled that 'They used to make films every ten days and I'd go from one set to another...If I finished

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<sup>236</sup> Eric Blackmore, *Kinematograph Weekly* (Studio Review), 29 May 1958, p. iv.

<sup>237</sup> Leonard White quoted in Helen Wheatley, 'And Now for Your Sunday Night Drama...: Experimentation and *Armchair Theatre*', in Laura Mulvey and Jamie Sexton (eds), *Experimental British Cinema*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 31-47 (p. 35).

<sup>238</sup> Anon, 'Elstree's Poverty Row', *Films and Filming*, September 1984, pp. 17-18 (p. 17).

one film at Friday lunchtime, I'd walk to another set and start the next one that afternoon, changing my jacket or whatever for the new character'.<sup>239</sup> Low budgets, tight rehearsal times, small casts and sets and the strict enforcement of production times, created a direct parallel with television's live transmission affected by the same restrictions. Ultimately, without access to television advertising or buffering by the licence fee, the 'B' movie relied more than television on rigidly formulaic modes of production and standard products. In these ways, budget constraints compelled low budget film-making to become less cinematic and more like the live television shows of the 1950s.

The pressure on 'B' film producers was then to produce entirely for TV or try to make bigger pictures. The Danzingers' chief scriptwriter in 1956 was Brian Clemens, later producer of *The Avengers*, and he, in a letter published in the spring issue of *Sight and Sound* of that year, wrote that he would like to obtain pre-1950 copies of the magazine because the Danzingers were trying to branch out into major production. 'I can assure you that possession of these magazines will have a definite bearing on the quality of future Danzinger productions', he explained.<sup>240</sup>

It was Clemens' good fortune that in the mid to late 1950s an interaction began between the producers of 'B' movies as they went out of business and ITV's corporate culture, which was 'a commitment to mass entertainment as an end in itself...and an insistence on the highest standards of technical excellence in every

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<sup>239</sup> Vincent Ball quoted in Brian McFarlane, *Autobiography of British Cinema* (London: Methuen, 1997), p. 55.

<sup>240</sup> Brian Clemens, 'Back Numbers', *Sight and Sound*, vol.25, no.4, Spring 1956, p. 218.

aspect of program making'.<sup>241</sup> The adventure series made for television would gain a new lease of life after the failure of 'B' pictures. Writers such as Clemens were the direct beneficiaries of the confluence between ITV and the film industry. But crucially, this did not mean employing mediocre technicians and crew from the lower reaches of the film industry, but some of the best that British cinema could offer. Employment opportunities had disappeared due to the declining British film industry and the loss not only of the 'B' movie, but the medium-budget genre film by the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>242</sup> The demise of Rank after 1961, as a prolific film company of medium budget genre films, was to affect a film director such as Roy Ward Baker who would later direct on *The Avengers*, *The Saint* and *The Persuaders*.<sup>243</sup>

The early 1960s saw the start of several telefilm series that were celebrated for their writerly and production quality. When Lew Grade's Incorporated Television Company (ITC) began to produce drama in the mid 1950s with *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, he called upon the services of the British film industry, including its technicians. Sidney Cole, who had had ten years of experience at Ealing Studios, was called in to oversee the *Robin Hood* series. Cole decided to set up production as if it were a cinema feature, so men such as Bernard Knowles who, as a cameraman, had worked for Alfred Hitchcock, were employed to direct.<sup>244</sup> It is interesting to note that many on the production team of *The Avengers* also came after distinguished careers in

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<sup>241</sup> Jonathan David Tankel, 'Program Production for Export and the Domestic Market: Authorship in *The Avengers*', in Robert J. Thompson and Gary Burns (eds), *Making Television: Authorship and the Production Process* (London: Praeger Publications, 1990), pp. 83-91 (p. 84).

<sup>242</sup> From the 1950s, cinema attendance steadily fell by 3-4% year-on-year. 1957 is usually thought of as especially symbolic because ticket sales fell below 1,000 million. A steady decline in box-office share for British films continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. See BFI, 'Information Guide, No.1' <<http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/publications/pub-rep-brief/pdf/industry.pdf>> [accessed July 2011].

<sup>243</sup> Geoff Mayer, *Roy Ward Baker* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2004), p. 38.

<sup>244</sup> Robert Sellers, *Cult TV: The Golden Age of ITC* (London: Plexus, 2006), p. 20.

cinema, such as Julian Wintle, a former film editor turned producer who had co-founded Independent Artists in 1958 and whose credits included *Tiger Bay* (1959).<sup>245</sup>

### **Cultural Value in *Colonel March of Scotland Yard* (1955)**

This confluence between film-making and television had started since before the end of the BBC monopoly. The American Hannah Weinstein, while in France, had begun planning a television police series, *Colonel March of Scotland Yard*. She went to London in 1952 and produced three pilot episodes in a non-credited capacity, which were re-edited and released in 1953 as a feature film entitled *Colonel March Investigates*. On the basis of this film, a television series was commissioned, shot in Britain, and distributed in the US by Weinstein's company Official Films in 1954-55, before it was broadcast on ITV.<sup>246</sup> Weinstein, who was later to produce *Robin Hood*, had created *Colonel March* from the stories by the author John Dickson Carr (writing as Carter Dickson). Carr was most famous for writing 'locked room' mysteries in which the body was found alone in a sealed room without a visible means by which the murderer could have gained access. He represented one of the best-known writers of the Golden Age of Detective stories.<sup>247</sup>

However, the initial reviews of *Colonel March Investigates* were not encouraging. *The Monthly Film Bulletin* referred to 'these three gimmicky little stories [that] have the appearance of being aimed as much at television as the cinema

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<sup>245</sup> Anne Francis, *Julian Wintle: a Memoir* (London: Dukeswood, 1985), pp. 59-60.

<sup>246</sup> Steve Neale, 'Transatlantic Ventures and *Robin Hood*', in Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (eds), *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), pp. 73-87 (p. 79).

<sup>247</sup> Julian Symons, *Bloody Murder: from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 119-20.

market'.<sup>248</sup> Nevertheless, Weinstein's company Official Films had secured financial arrangements for the series' 26 half-hour episodes, which ensured exhibition through a number of American television syndicates in 1954-55.<sup>249</sup> This strategy, known as pre-selling, was brought to Britain by American producers such as Weinstein. However, British producers had to wait before using the same strategy until ITP (ITC) entered American television distribution with Sapphire Films in the late 1950s.<sup>250</sup>

The production of the mostly studio-bound series took place at Southall Studios during the winter of 1952-53. Southall Studios was one of the smallest film studios at the time, but later also the home to Monty Berman and Robert S. Baker who were to produce 'B' movies for Tempean Films before going on, in the early 1960s, to make *The Saint* for ITV at Elstree.<sup>251</sup> British directors Bernard Knowles and Arthur Crabtree directed 17 of the 26 half-hour episodes of *Colonel March* between them.<sup>252</sup> They had been talented cinematographers before the war and Crabtree and Knowles had become directors by 1945 for Gainsborough Pictures, but in the declining film industry of the 1950s they found work making 'B' movies in the cheapest type of film-making studios. The *Colonel March* series must be regarded as illustrative of the early confluence, already visible in the US, between talented cinema practitioners, the

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<sup>248</sup> Anon, 'Colonel March Investigates', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol. 20, no.23, June 1953, p. 88.

<sup>249</sup> Neale, 'Transatlantic Ventures and *Robin Hood*', p. 80.

<sup>250</sup> ITP was originally the Incorporated Television Programme Company (ITPC) set up in 1954 to bid for an ITV franchise. By 1958 it had become the Incorporated Television Company (ITC).

<sup>251</sup> Anon, 'Southall Film Studios' <<http://www.southallfilmstudios.com/thehistory.htm>> [accessed January 2011].

<sup>252</sup> Dave Mann, 'Epicurean Disdain and the Rhetoric of Defiance: *Colonel March of Scotland Yard*', *Scope* online journal of film studies. <<http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=11&id=1021>> [accessed January 2011].



(British) 'B' film industry and television. The series became one of the first to be broadcast in America and the UK, appearing on ITV London, in 1955.

The success of Official Films and distribution of *Colonel March* led to Weinstein setting up a new production company, Sapphire Films. After discussing the idea for a new series, Weinstein entered into negotiations with ATV in the UK. It was Lew Grade, with the agreement of Prince Littler, Chairman of the Board of ATV, who would fund and distribute not only *Colonel March* but also *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.<sup>253</sup> Using this method, they were able to share production and distribution costs, gain access to an overseas market, and circumvent the quota of 14% of foreign programming on ITV because both shows were shot in Britain and used British personnel.

The 'B' movie thriller had long been the staple of the domestic film industry. One of its main attractions was the availability of contemporary locations and everyday props and costumes that helped to reduce production costs. Moreover, the early British telefilm series exploited the internationally marketable mythologies and iconography of Scotland Yard and/or the English detective.<sup>254</sup> Susan Sydney-Smith has explained how the role of the detective was understood to be superior to the ordinary, everyday tasks of the beat policeman, because the detective was not often employed but lived according to independent means.<sup>255</sup> This attitude to 'what was essentially a class attitude was inherited from literary precedents whereby "golden-age" detectives eschewed crime in favour of solving the puzzle of serious crime', in

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<sup>253</sup> Robert Sellers, *Cult TV: The Golden Age of ITC* (London: Plexus, 2006), p. 17.

<sup>254</sup> Dave Mann, 'Epicurean Disdain and the Rhetoric of Defiance: *Colonel March of Scotland Yard*'.

<sup>255</sup> Susan Sydney-Smith, *Beyond Dixon of Dock Green: Early British Police Series* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 101.

contrast to the more modern procedural police series being seen in *Dragnet* (1951-59).<sup>256</sup>

The difference between British programmes, such as *Fabian of the Yard* (1954-56), a detective series shot on film, and the US crime telefilms, was the attitude to class that existed in British culture. In *Colonel March of Scotland Yard*, Boris Karloff, playing the lead role, occupied an office that was cosily reminiscent of a gentleman's study; book-lined and equipped with exotica such as an Eastern statuette. Why a Scotland Yard detective should have had so many books and *objets d'art* in an office used for day-to-day law enforcement was not explained. The use of the rank, Colonel March, a rank not in use within the British Police, was also not justified, but added to the image being presented of Karloff as a semi-retired gentleman now being used to foil the most challenging of perplexing crimes. Colonel March's English persona of an upper class gentleman was repeated when Karloff reappeared in the supernatural series, *The Veil*.<sup>257</sup>

Signifiers of Englishness were important in *Colonel March* and help suggest how its foregrounding in future adventure shows was used to sell them to America and abroad: the difference between the two cultures lay somewhere in the difference between the (English) detective adventure and the (American) crime story. The first usually depended on an amateur detective rather than a professional policeman.<sup>258</sup> Colonel March, although a Scotland Yard detective, appeared to be an amateur

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<sup>256</sup> Sydney-Smith, *Beyond Dixon of Dock Green*, p. 101.

<sup>257</sup> For an example of *The Veil*, see <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9Bgcmdw97A>> [accessed January 2011]. The first episode, *Vision of Crime*, starred Robert Hardy and the future *Avengers* star, Patrick Macnee. Eleven episodes were produced, but due to trouble within the Roach studio, none were transmitted until much later.

<sup>258</sup> Symons, *Bloody Murder: from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, pp. 173-201.

unencumbered by a routine, more in the tradition of a super sleuth like Sherlock Holmes. Secondly, if the crime was murder, which it almost invariably was, the method was bizarre and would require a degree of ingenuity to solve. This became a theme in later adventure series, which included a detective. For example, Patrick Macnee as John Steed would fulfil the role of gentleman-adventurer and have to solve the most complex and challenging of puzzles.

### **Cultural Value in the Juvenile Adventure Dramas (1955-59)**

Lew Grade's solution for off-setting production costs was to use his company, Incorporated Television Company (ITC), as a subsidiary of ATV to produce programmes for ATV and for sale to the rest of the world.<sup>259</sup> One of the earliest British exports of the new types of popular telefilm entertainment that ITV would turn into a successful commercial formula was *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Originally produced by Hannah Weinstein of Sapphire Films, before being controlled by Lew Grade's ITP/C, it very quickly became a success. In 1955, Grade had met Hannah Weinstein, who had pitched a series of 39 half-hour shows for a new series, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955-59). Grade liked the proposal and, told by Weinstein that each episode would cost £10,000, took the relatively bold decision at the time to give the project the go-ahead.<sup>260</sup> Ten years later, ATV was able to expect a major proportion of its revenues to come from its overseas sales; as much as \$12 million annually.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> ATV, 'Incorporated Television Company', *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1961, p. 10.

<sup>260</sup> Robert Sellers, *Cult TV: The Golden Age of ITC* (London: Plexus, 2006), p. 17.

<sup>261</sup> Rod Allen, 'The Lew Legend', *Television Mail*, 22 October 1965, pp. 16-17 (p. 16).

By 1956, when ATV had begun broadcasting, *Robin Hood* was second in the audience ratings in the Midlands.<sup>262</sup> *Robin Hood* was the first historical costume adventure on British television, but they soon proliferated, including *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot* (1956-57), *The Buccaneers* (1956-57), and *Sir Francis Drake* (1961-62). Part of their appeal was to the junior audience. A mother reported that 'Before the advent of ITV my small daughters played at cowboys. Now there isn't a gun in the house...Instead they have home-made bows and arrows like their new hero, Robin Hood'.<sup>263</sup>

Many of these early action-adventure shows relied on clean-cut heroes in imitation of earlier radio shows such as *Dick Barton*, *Special Agent* (1946-51) on the BBC Light Programme and the comic-strips of *The Eagle*, begun in 1950 as a reaction to their founder's disgust at American 'horror' comics.<sup>264</sup> The book *Parade of Pleasure: a Study of Popular Iconography in the USA* (1954) by Geoffrey Wagner was typical of the adverse view of American mass culture in Britain at this time.<sup>265</sup> *Dick Barton* was, like *Robin Hood* which followed it, an overnight success with its young audience.<sup>266</sup> Unlike much of American culture, which was considered too violent, the stories in *Dick Barton* were about a clean-living detective who never

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<sup>262</sup> Anon, 'Britain TV Faves', *Variety*, 14 November 1956, p. 31.

<sup>263</sup> Doris Hellen, 'Bedroom Hide-out', *TV Times*, 22-28 October 1955, p. 4.

<sup>264</sup> American horror comics would lead to their import ban under the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act of 1955. John Morris was disgusted by the US horror comics and had founded *The Eagle* comic as a result. *Tales from the Crypt* and the *Haunt of Fear*, begun in 1950, were the most famous of the horror comics.

<sup>265</sup> Geoffrey Wagner, *Parade of Pleasure: a Study of Popular Iconography in the USA* (New York: Library Publishers, 1955)

<sup>266</sup> Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol.4, *Sound and Vision, 1945-55* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 58.

drinks or uses 'even slightly profane language: he fights clean and never lies.' The programme was so popular it far outstripped *The Archers* in terms of popularity.<sup>267</sup>

*Robin Hood* was seen in both Britain and America as particularly suitable for children as well as having cross-over appeal to adults when fathers might be expected to sit with their sons and be enthralled by the foiling of another dastardly plot and the attractions of Bernadette O'Farrell playing Maid Marion. Lew Grade, the producer of *Robin Hood*, was somewhat of a puritan; but later, he would declare 'My tastes are the same as the average member of the public...The public don't want dreary, slovenly shows, nor do they want violence, sex or problems in their entertainment.'<sup>268</sup> Grade was to hit the headlines in the mid 1960s when he put his TV taste very much into the public eye by announcing that he had banned the BBC's *Steptoe and Son* (1962-1974) from his home screen. He explained that he did not want his ten year old son to hear the sort of language that was heard on one of the BBC's most popular shows.<sup>269</sup>

But if good taste was part of *Robin Hood's* appeal, the role was far removed from the Hollywood version personified by Errol Flynn. If Richard Greene, playing Robin Hood, lacked the matinee idol looks, he made up for it with his 'English' qualities of fair play. 'This Robin Hood was as English as cricket and warm beer. One could just as easily picture him smoking a pipe by the fireplace, listening to the Home Service, as riding roughshod though Sherwood Forest'.<sup>270</sup> Greene's Robin has

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<sup>267</sup> Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, p. 58. *The Archers* was a popular BBC radio programme begun in 1951.

<sup>268</sup> Rod Allen, 'The Lew Legend', *Television Mail*, 22 October 1965, pp. 16-17 (p. 17).

<sup>269</sup> Allen, 'The Lew Legend', p. 17.

<sup>270</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV* (London: Plexus, 2006), p. 17.

been described as an archetypal fifties English hero: '[the show] is serious enough to insist on a decent moral, to forbid violence and human falsity.'<sup>271</sup>

What was significant was that these telefilm adventures were not only shown domestically but sold to the US where they enjoyed a major success. James Chapman argues that the 'most significant thing about *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was that it was sold to American television where it was successfully shown in syndication for many years'.<sup>272</sup> Other British telefilms followed; such as *Sir Lancelot*, broadcast on NBC in 1956-57; *The Buccaneers* on CBS in 1956-57; and *Sir Francis Drake* on NBC in 1963. By 1958, *Robin Hood* was in distribution worldwide and was being shown in Canada, Australia, Japan and Puerto Rico.<sup>273</sup> However, an insistence on its British origins and its use of language and settings were to characterise it as 'one of the pioneers of British television in America'.<sup>274</sup> The sale of the *Robin Hood* series would mean it was '...reported in December 1955 that the sale of the...series to America "has brought to England a million and a quarter dollars – nearly half a million pounds"''.<sup>275</sup>

The export of telefilm adventure programmes to US networks was premised on them being structured in similar ways to American Westerns, but with the additional superiority over many US produced series in terms of 'quality' and cultural

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<sup>271</sup> Lindsay Anderson, 'Notes from Sherwood', *Sight and Sound*, vol.26, no.3, 1956/57, pp.159-60 (p. 159).

<sup>272</sup> James Chapman, *Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series in the 1960s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 7.

<sup>273</sup> Anon, 'United States Telefilms in Display around the Globe', *Variety*, 4 June 1958, pp.36-37 (p. 37).

<sup>274</sup> Jeff Evans, *The Penguin TV Companion* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>275</sup> Chapman, *Saints and Avengers*, p.7.

value. For example, the publicity for *Robin Hood* in *TV Times* was to include a claim that each episode had been produced with painstaking historical authenticity.<sup>276</sup>

The success of *Robin Hood* in Britain began a debate that reappeared at various times throughout the 1960s about how it and other adventure shows could be regarded as a ‘cultural artefact’ rather than a commodity although, as we have seen, running the risk of becoming too transatlantic.<sup>277</sup> Hannah Weinstein, was quoted as saying that ‘We have been highly praised by the schools in America, because the kind of English spoken in my films is infinitely more literate than the kind of stuff the kids hear around them at home’.<sup>278</sup> The doyen of *Free Cinema*, Lindsay Anderson, who directed several episodes of *Robin Hood*, wrote that ‘many of the scripts originate in America, but are rewritten in Britain, without any attempt to Americanise speech or attitude’.<sup>279</sup>

By the 1960s, besides cultural value that made a series distinctively ‘British’, the corporate culture of ITV, especially at ATV-ITC and ABC-TV, meant that ‘technical quality equal, or even superior, to Hollywood became a matter of corporate policy’.<sup>280</sup> This was echoed by Howard Thomas, the managing director of Thames Television and director of ABC Television Films. ‘[As] Successful television film

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<sup>276</sup> Edward Fox, ‘How *Robin Hood* was filmed’, *TV Times*, 1-7 October, 1955, p 6-7.

<sup>277</sup> For example, Howard Thomas believed that Grade’s adventure series were targeted at Birmingham, Alabama, rather than Birmingham in the Midlands, where ATV held its ITV franchise. See Lewis Chester, *The Life of Lew Grade* (London: Arum, 2010), p. 137.

<sup>278</sup> Hannah Weinstein quoted in Steve Neale, ‘Transatlantic ventures and *Robin Hood*’, in Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (eds), *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), p. 76.

However, the citation that Neale offers is incorrect.

<sup>279</sup> Lindsay Anderson, ‘Notes from Sherwood’, *Sight and Sound*, vol.26, no.3, 1956/57, pp. 159-60 (p. 159). By saying that many of the scripts originated in America, Anderson was probably alluding to the fact that many of the scripts relied on blacklisted Hollywood writers such as Ringgold Wilmer Lardner Jr., who wrote for *Robin Hood*.

<sup>280</sup> Jonathan Tankel, ‘Program Production for Export and the Domestic Market: Authorship in *The Avengers*’, in Robert J. Thompson and Gary Burns (eds), *Making Television: Authorship and the Production Process* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1990), pp. 83-91 (p. 87).

series depends upon the combined skills of carefully assembled teams of highly motivated film-cum-television men,' he explained.<sup>281</sup> We have already seen how Lew Grade was quick to employ Sidney Cole and others who had experience of the film industry, and were regarded as having excellent professional skills. 'Behind the scenes, Grade and Hannah Weinstein...insisted on the best'.<sup>282</sup>

### **The Industrial Scale of Television Film**

The search for content and the development of new sub-genres which characterised the adventure series within the form of the telefilm from the mid 1950s in the UK must be understood in the context of an increasingly large-scale operation that came to be conceived by theoreticians, such as Raymond Williams, as the industrialisation of television. This, along with the old and new technologies of recording (film and video), had important consequences for generic development within the adventure series. The important advantage of filmed, rather than live, production, which was well-known in the US where many Hollywood film studios had been adapted for television production from the mid 1950s, was not only that repeats were easy to schedule but also programmes could be made available to the export market. Even before tape recording was possible, Hugh Carleton Greene, then Assistant Controller of BBC Overseas Services, wrote an article in *BBC Quarterly* in 1952/53 and began a discourse in the UK about the terms of an international television market:

Television transcriptions, whether kinescopes or specially produced films, are, for a variety of reasons, extremely costly. Only by breaking into the United States market

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<sup>281</sup> Howard Thomas, 'The Hard Facts about Producing Television Film Series', *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.34, Winter, 1968-69, pp. 14-15 (p. 14).

<sup>282</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV*, p. 20.



could a [BBC] television transcription service hope to make both ends meet.<sup>283</sup>

As we have seen, it was, initially, the specially produced film or the US telefilm series, finding their way onto British television, which permitted the BBC and ITV companies to help fill the new growing schedules that were attracting sizeable audiences. Inevitably, these US shows provided generic models to both audiences and producers in the UK, and the industrialisation of production with organisational efficiencies privileged the evolution of forms, such as the series drama and more broadly light entertainment shows, which could be delivered by such methods. A 1956 BBC Programming Planning memo noted a ten percent increase in transmission hours over the preceding year, and indicated where the increase had been. Light entertainment had increased by 89 hours and drama had increased by only six hours.<sup>284</sup>

By the mid-1960s the difference in typical content in popular and quality drama had become less clear and 'Light entertainment shares with the film series and old films...what most people want most of the time from television.'<sup>285</sup> A series such as *The Avengers* would come to occupy a centre ground between drama and light entertainment. Here it was possible to explore televisual mode and form while retaining all the features of a popular generic series. Whereas the 1950s BBC serial *Quatermass* had intrigued viewers with its formal novelty and science-fiction content,

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<sup>283</sup> High Carleton Greene, 'Television Transcription: the Economic Possibilities', *BBC Quarterly*, vol.7, no.4, 1952-53, pp. 216-221 (p. 217). The BBC Transcription Service had been set up in 1952. See Jason Jacobs, *The Intimate Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.12.

<sup>284</sup> Head of Programme Planning, Television, 'Television Transmission Time,' memo, BBC, WAC T16/243/4, 25 May 1956.

<sup>285</sup> Joan Bakewell and Nicholas Garnham, *The New Priesthood: British Television Today* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p. 53.

by the mid-1960s innovative material was enthusiastically welcomed: the polarity between ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ drama had been occupied by light entertainment programmes that demonstrated a growing sophistication amongst producers, directors and audiences, and which transcended a simple division between high and popular culture.

The industrial structures that evolved in the UK meant that film entertainment in Britain was used to create aesthetically valuable ‘public service’ television that also had a commercial value and appealed to a domestic, transatlantic and international audience. There was rarely a question as to whether programmes such as *Danger Man*, *The Avengers* and *The Prisoner* were British in origin, but, rather, whether they were aesthetically British and conformed to a public service model that valued, as we have seen, notions of a balance and mix between entertainment and information.

However, the influence of North America on British TV was not only because of the import of American programmes to Britain. Sydney Newman was one of many Canadians offered employment in British TV in the 1950s and 1960s. One explanation for the strong Canadian presence at many of the ITV companies was because:

One of the problems at the beginning [of ITV] was the shortage of experienced TV directors. There were very few in Britain, and the BBC had most of them under contract. Not being able to compete with American salaries, Granada did the next best thing and hired half a dozen Canadians, who were as experienced in television drama as anyone in the world.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Unidentified source quoted in Michele Hilmes, ‘North Atlantic Triangle: Britain, the USA and Canada in 1950s Television’, *Media History*, vol.16, no.1, February 2010, pp. 31-52 (p. 44).

Moreover, Michele Hilmes has explained that Canadian professionals were hired not only because of their experience working within the US film and television industry, but Canada, crucially, retained a national public ethos against the commercialism of the US.<sup>287</sup> As an example, the institution of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had been established in 1936.

Newman had worked in New York, before being offered the position of Head of Drama at ABC-TV in 1958, largely because of his achievements on a series of *General Motors Theatre* productions, purchased by the BBC. This had brought him to the attention of Howard Thomas, managing director of ABC. Newman is credited with two accomplishments at ABC-TV that reflected his North American background: a populist approach to drama that used a form of social realism on *Armchair Theatre* and the innovation and encouragement given to the production of popular series such as *Police Surgeon* (1960) starring Ian Hendry and, when that series stopped, the pairing of Hendry with Patrick Macnee in the original *Avengers* (1961). *Police Surgeon* was conceived within a mode that used psychological realism similar to the types of social realism in *Armchair Theatre*. However, Newman had decided that '[*The Avengers*] would be a fun series that would get away from the realism of *Police Surgeon* (something which my major series *Armchair Theatre* was noted for)'.<sup>288</sup> The format would be 'an action adventure-thriller with a sense of humour. I felt I could capitalise on the current John Le Carré/Ian Fleming genre and send it up'.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Michele Hilmes, 'Who We Are, Who We Are Not: Battle of the Global Paradigms', in Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar (eds), *Planet Television: A Global Television Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), pp. 53-73.

<sup>288</sup> Sydney Newman quoted in Patrick Macnee and Dave Rogers, *The Avengers and Me* (London: Titan Books, 1997), p. 25.

<sup>289</sup> Macnee and Rogers, *The Avengers and Me*, p.25.

But it would be short-sighted not to acknowledge that there was opposition to Newman and his attitude to television drama. Don Taylor, a BBC trained producer who had worked with David Mercer, later attacked Newman:

Sydney was not formally educated, and frankly, knew little about the history or range of world drama...For hour after hour, he extolled to me the virtues of the American series, *The Naked City*, a New York cop drama with pretensions to dealing with Issues and I could not...convince him that drama was anything other than this kind of overplayed *Reader's Digest* seriousness, served up with all the sweaty melodrama characteristic of the American film industry at its lower levels.<sup>290</sup>

One of Taylor's main objections to Newman was that he had 'industrialised the making of television drama'.<sup>291</sup> Earlier, it was John Grierson who had exclaimed that 'Newman, you've got a B picture mentality!'<sup>292</sup> However, Newman reminisced that some years later 'a kindly Canadian advertiser for whom I was working in television advised "Cut out all that long-haired stuff, Newman!" These opposing views, made in my impressionistic years, are still with me today,' he explained.<sup>293</sup> Newman helped to embody the contradictions within British television at the time and its eclecticism between the populist and the serious. Later, in the 1970s, he tried to sum up his position as one that regarded drama as an antidote to the 'reality' of the television i.e. its news output: 'At least with the work of an artist people know it as a work of the imagination. It is made up, fabricated. People know where they stand in relation to it. They are free to accept it or not [but]...the constrictions and indeed

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<sup>290</sup> Don Taylor, *Days of Vision-Working with David Mercer: Television Drama Then and Now* (London: Methuen, 1990), pp. 186-7.

<sup>291</sup> Taylor, *Days of Vision-Working with David Mercer*, p. 190.

<sup>292</sup> Sydney Newman, in ABC (Corporate author), 'The Producer', *The Armchair Theatre* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), pp. 16-19 (p.16).

<sup>293</sup> Newman, in ABC (Corporate author), 'The Producer', p.16.

privilege of public responsibility reach their ultimate in television...<sup>294</sup> Here then was a balancing act between the aspirations of the British television professional who wished to produce more challenging and often contemporary drama and ‘the quest by American television entrepreneurs to satisfy their concept of world markets...’<sup>295</sup>

It should be remembered that *The Avengers* had been originally intended to be partly based on another American series, *The Thin Man*, a series of films from the 1930-40s. Howard Thomas explained that:

As the percentage of realistic and gloomy plays increased I suggested to [Sydney] Newman that our drama schedules need balancing with something more light-hearted and *sophisticated* [my italics]. I reminded him of the days when MGM produced sparkling comedies tailored for their contract stars like Clarke Gable, Carole Lombard, Myrna Loy and Norma Shearer, elegantly dressed and in fashionable settings. Why couldn’t we make a series based, for instance, on *The Thin Man*, with characters like those made famous by William Powell and Myrna Loy?<sup>296</sup>

The proposal for a programme that was both ‘popular’ and ‘sophisticated’ led to the first series of *The Avengers* in January 1961 and in 1962 Patrick Macnee was matched with a former Rank starlet, Honor Blackman.<sup>297</sup> The idea of introducing sophistication and glamour into an ‘adventure-thriller’ was the device that would lead to an enormously successful series. It is worth hearing how Macnee’s character was conceived by the end of the third series in the summer of 1964 and might fit into an

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<sup>294</sup> Sydney Newman, ‘Newman Defends the Role of Drama in Television Output at ADP Lecture’, *Broadcast*, 27 September 1976, p. 4.

<sup>295</sup> Newman, ‘Newman Defends the Role of Drama in Television Output at ADP Lecture’, p. 4.

<sup>296</sup> Howard Thomas, *With an Independent Air: Encounters during a Lifetime of Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 189.

<sup>297</sup> Blackman had previously been in Hannah Weinstein’s production of *Four Just Men*, 1959, before joining *The Avengers* for the second series in 1962.

earlier generic lineage. In the briefing to the production team for the character of John Steed he was described as:

The professional undercover man. His “cover” is that of “man-about-town” with a private income. He is suave, witty, debonair; foppish even. These qualities are conscientiously cultivated to disarm his opponents...Steed’s tastes are gentlemanly and slightly self-indulgent. He uses the best tailor, best bootmaker, best wine merchant, frequents the best restaurants, best clubs, reads the Royal edition of *The Times*, plays bridge, bezique, polo, croquet...Steed’s flat (5 Westminster Mews, S.W.1) reflects family tradition and heritage...a tiger skin, a portrait of Great-Grandfather Steed...<sup>298</sup>

At the same time, the production brief made clear that:

Steed is an expert; dedicated, ruthless...He has been thoroughly trained in arson, burglary, forgery, explosives, codes, prisons, torture, murder...he can produce a fund of guns, poison capsules, time bombs, microscopic transmitters...<sup>299</sup>

Here we have the clubland amateur brought up-to-date who, like John Drake in *Danger Man*, was a professional technician, but, unlike Drake, has upper-class credentials as a gentleman. However, patriotism and duty would be supplemented by newer themes ‘the confrontation with foreigners, in a foreign theatre of operations, is a source of pleasure as well as danger...[and] becomes additionally coded with discourses pertaining to...conspicuous consumption...’<sup>300</sup>

Another key figure of the transatlantic market for British television, as we have seen, was Lew Grade. Jonathan Bignell has argued that ‘Lew Grade is an iconic figure in British television history, representing simultaneous but divergent attitudes

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<sup>298</sup> John Bryce, ‘Producer of *The Avengers*, ABC TV’, *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, No.16, Summer 1964, pp. 6-8 (p. 7).

<sup>299</sup> Bryce, ‘Producer of *The Avengers*, ABC TV’, p. 7.

<sup>300</sup> David Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.77.

to independent television as an industry, institution, programme-maker and facet of British culture.<sup>301</sup> Like Newman, Grade can be understood as the agent or *primus motor* of events during the 1960s. It should be remembered that many of the first recruits to ITV were from light entertainment. Grade was an agent for variety stars before becoming a programme executive. His background naturally influenced his choice of programmes and he sold them to the valuable American market. However, he can be additionally understood as a point of confluence for broader social, economic and institutional structures that were shaping British television in the 1960s. Marshall Pugh writing in the *Daily Mail* jokingly called Grade ‘television’s last tycoon’<sup>302</sup> and Grade’s apparent similarity to a Hollywood mogul and the contradictory meanings of Americanness had to be carefully balanced by Grade himself with other values associated with British public broadcasting.

Grade’s image as an impresario belies the fact that he defended ATV and ITV in general from accusations of triviality by allowing for the production of ‘high-brow’ shows. When interviewed in 1963 about ATV’s image as an essentially mass entertainment company, Grade’s rejoinder was:

People who think that...don’t know our Midland programmes. In London we only have Saturdays and Sundays when people want to be entertained. But even at weekends we have educational programmes, documentaries and religion. So we do much more than entertain...I’m proud of *Emergency Ward 10*, praised widely by doctors and medical authorities. That’s the kind of achievement we work for.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Jonathan Bignell, ‘And the Rest is History: Lew Grade, Creation, Narratives and Television Historiography’, in Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (eds), *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), pp. 57-70 (p. 57).

<sup>302</sup> Marshall Pugh quoted in Rod Allen, ‘The Lew Legend’, *Television Mail*, 22 October 1965, pp.16-17 (p. 16).

<sup>303</sup> Wilfred Altman, ‘ATV: Company Profile’, *Contrast*, vol.2, no.4, Summer 1963, p. 277.

However, Grade came in for a great deal of criticism which mostly consisted of not putting enough culture into ATV's programming. At a dinner, it was reported he had been confronted by a disgruntled Member of Parliament who attacked him for the cultural content of his programmes. 'We had seven Members of Parliament on the other night,' Grade was to say. 'That wasn't culture,' replied the M.P. 'It certainly wasn't entertainment,' Grade rejoined.<sup>304</sup> Grade's approach to television, concluded the *Television Mail* was 'popular, almost vulgar, but continually successful. In a recent week (ended 21 March, 1965), 10 out of 10 of the top programmes in the ATV Midland area were transmitted by ATV...' <sup>305</sup>

The entry of other entrepreneurs into television, but this time from the declining film industry rather than theatrical variety, would lead to the production of another adventure series, *The Saint*, in the 1960s. The company Tempean Films had had a consistent record of success that had relied on an earlier ability to turn out 'B' movies. The company had been founded by Robert Baker and Monty Berman. Berman had similarities to Lew Grade in that he loved the business of film-making as much as Grade loved making entertainment, and both men enjoyed the business of running a company.<sup>306</sup> Brian McFarlane has argued that Tempean Films 'suggest ways which these robust film-makers went about giving touches of individuality to more or less quotidian enterprises.'<sup>307</sup> However, once the work in the British film

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<sup>304</sup> Quoted in Allen, 'The Lew Legend', p. 17.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>306</sup> Johnny Goodman, author's interview, 1 April 2011.

<sup>307</sup> Brian McFarlane, 'Value for Money: Baker and Berman and Tempean Films', in Ian MacKillop and Neil Sinyard (eds), *British Cinema of the 1950s: a Celebration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 176-189 (p. 187).



industry dried up, Baker and Berman had turned to television and adjusted their experiences to the length, generic conventions and tight shooting schedules of weekly episodes in series as *The Saint* (1962-69) and, Baker, without Berman, in *The Persuaders* (1971-72). All of the elements which characterised the enterprise – continuity of personnel, the use of locations outside the studio whenever feasible and desirable, the ensuring of money spent on the films (on casting, on settings) would appear on the television screen as much as it had at the cinema. Their clear sense of what would work with audiences, and the long background of varied experience amassed by the partners working in the film industry, became transferable to television in the making of ITC drama in the 1960s.

*The Saint* involved Roger Moore in a wide range of stories – patching up broken love affairs; rescuing damsels in distress; helping a blind woman to lead a more satisfactory life; being cornered in a local election murder; helping a friend who becomes the victim of blackmail. However, each of these stories also took him all over the world: London; New York; Rome; Paris; Miami; Geneva; Southern Spain; Canada; the Bahamas. The whole atmosphere of the show was used to create the feeling of adventure and luxurious living; the Saint lived in a sophisticated world on the sets of the Associated British Studios at Elstree. The professional film-making skills that were called upon to realise the ambition of shooting so in many exotic places when, in fact, they were based in a studio in Britain, led Monty Berman, in 1964, to tell a reporter ‘To produce a TV series, you must keep everything orderly; and providing the scripts are all right, then the rest of the work is selecting the right

people and checking up all the time'.<sup>308</sup> Instead of the airless look that had affected too many British 'B' movies, and, arguably, drama in the television studio, his new company, New World, was able with *The Saint* to ensure that money was spent on casting and settings. Critics at the time praised its production values and technical polish. 'Production values are a potent plus, with a wide variety of sets and glossy atmosphere,' reported *Variety*.<sup>309</sup>

By the late 1960s, ITC had become a colossus of film production in Britain, with an output far greater than that of all the other ITV companies in telefilm production. It had, by the late 1960s, an average of three series in production simultaneously and was responsible for a total of approximately 75 hours of film production.<sup>310</sup> Since the late 1950s, the television film series had relied heavily on established feature film directors and writers as well as technicians such as art directors and editors, and it should be remembered that ITC was not a production company but contracted producers to make films on its behalf, as well as having subsidiary companies of its own. The main contract producers at ITC were Robert Baker and stars such as Roger Moore (BaMoore Productions); Patrick McGoohan (Everyman Productions); Monty Berman and Robert Baker (New World).

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<sup>308</sup> Quoted in Tony Gruner, 'Baker and Berman's Saint Goes Marching On – And On', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 August 1964, p. 15.

<sup>309</sup> Anon, 'The Saint (The Miracle Tea Party)', *Variety*, 7 October 1964.

<sup>310</sup> John K. Newnham, 'Television's Place in Film Production', *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.34, Winter 1968-69, pp. 4-6 (p. 5).

## **Conclusion:**

### **Celluloid and Selling Abroad**

This chapter has narrowed the focus onto the cultural value of the action-adventure series in British television within a specific historical period. Initially, these television series were aesthetically consonant with existing American Western and crime genres copied from the cinema. However, by relying on an indigenous British public service, they depended on notions of quality linked to a cultural concept such as 'Britishness'. From the beginning many of these home-grown series were to develop a distinctive generic style of adventure. Programmes such as *Colonel March* were structured in similar ways to US crime drama. But they had the additional attraction of more complex narratives involving the detection of a large number of clues that might be sensational or puzzling, which became a feature of later programmes such as *The Avengers* whose plots were also highly ingenious.

At the same time, light entertainment was *the* key battleground on which ITV's dominance over the BBC and its values of popularity, even 'vulgarity', became a concern about the Americanisation of television and culture. One solution to the problem of American imports had been to produce British telefilms that were prized for their 'sophistication' and 'cultural value'. The hostility shown by the *Television Mail* to the imported *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and its praise for the domestic *The Avengers*, in spite of the fact that the former was more popular with audiences when placed against the latter in the schedules, continued to demonstrate that 'Britishness' was highly prized by the trade press and was of more value than a competing

American show.<sup>311</sup> Later, in *The Avengers*, there was dialectic of ‘us’ and ‘them’ – the ‘us’ becoming the ideologies of good taste and public service and the ‘them’ a vulgarity associated with commodification and the fear of Americanisation.

The most critical opinion on the ITV telefilm series would only consider that the production of the film action series comparable to a Hollywood style would not have any benefit to the British audience. But the entire process of export created marketing expertise and product recognition throughout the world. Negative criticism of the ITV telefilm has to be understood more generally as criticism of advertiser-supported entertainment. As the Pilkington Report stated in 1962, those ‘who criticised the production in this country of mid-Atlantic programmes were, we note, also especially critical of independent television.’<sup>312</sup>

The deployment of film in television offered an alternative to, although not a rejection of, Williams’ idea of flow, and offered a set of already developed conventions taken from Hollywood and the British ‘B’ movie cinema which television could use to form its own system of signification. In this way, the use of film as a recording medium and, more broadly, as a television technology, created a production discourse that became a negotiation between the economic and aesthetic. Rather than a dichotomy between commercial imperatives within a marketplace, and a service ethic, the blurring of light entertainment and ‘serious’ drama conventions represented a constant shifting between an emphasis on profit and a public service system. As we have seen, part of the distinctive look of film in the television adventure drama on ITV, by the 1960s, can be understood to be a result of an

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<sup>311</sup> Anon, ‘Avengership’, *Television Mail*, 29 October 1965, p. 8.

<sup>312</sup> *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting*, 1962, p. 67.

aesthetic from cinema and distinctive economics within the British film industry (no longer only from the low end of the film industry, but also the medium budget movie) allied to ITV's corporate culture.

For these reasons, there would, within British television, operate a space that would be a response to and contribution to the world of 'everyday' TV that might be broadcast live or transcribed, initially, as a telerecording or, later, onto videotape. In the 1960s, the opportunity appeared for a type of programme that could link together the feature film industry and the new industrial television. The success of former movie film-makers in television depended on the practical necessity of using film while videotape remained in its infancy and was too bulky to use outside the studio. However, the use of film also proposed an authored approach to the adventure series of the 1960s, as well as the production of a regulated form, that depended on a growing sophistication of the television audience. Nevertheless, instead of representing their authorial world vision, it might be better to say that an emerging house style or economic authorship for the adventure genre depended on ITV's corporate culture and the experience of low to medium budget film directors such as Monty Berman used to working to limited budgets, tight schedules, but with a clear sense of what the domestic audience wanted.

### **3. Technology: Creativity and Constraints**

#### **Introduction:**

So far, the thesis has argued that the image on television is an image of a particular social organisation held together on several levels – textual, generic and institutional. For many, such as Val Gielgud during the early days of television and the BBC monopoly, the televisual image promised immediacy because of its relay function. But, as the market for television was developed after the launch of ITV, visual extension was replaced by visible distinction that encouraged new forms of address. However, rather than a general address to an undifferentiated audience it was possible, by creating new programming strands within the general idea of flow, for ITV to offer an early version of consumer choice. The restrictive strategies at the BBC were being replaced even before the end of the monopoly, in anticipation of ITV going on air. From the mid 1950s certain types of images - for example, the close-up that showed a strict fealty to the actor - would be allowed to compete with images that were able to represent visual style and action.

By the 1960s, the televisual image had become complicated by the possibility of an international media market with complex and overlapping topographies between the idea of flow, programming and the homogenised text. It is the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate how the scale and organisation of technology allowed the devising of new methods of presenting style and action in the adventure series. The use of film would continue to challenge the idea of the live image or its corollary, the videotaped image shot inside the electronic studio. By the beginning of the 1970s, the belief that the electronic studio was the proper domain for British television drama would come under increasing pressure as new forms became prevalent, including the

use of 16mm film, and drama moved out of the studio. To fully illustrate this pressure, *Hazell*, an adventure series shot mostly in the TV studio, reveals the tensions felt by programme makers as drama increasingly found its way onto film outside of the studio.

### **Technical Imaginaries**

In this chapter, arguments to do with the deployment of 35mm and 16mm film, and their significance as to the formation of a television aesthetic on parts of British television, are investigated. They reveal that far from a simple technological determinism driving the need to work on film there was an intentionality in how its technology came to be understood and used on television. The ideation of film technology on television reveals how social forces can act on the production of prototypes, before transforming them. New technologies can contain considerable disruptive power, but Brian Winston has argued that often these changes are not as profound as has been claimed:

Many believe that this power is exercised in an untrammelled way and that our world is utterly transformed by these technologies...Our economic system is, [however] fundamentally, unchanged by these devices. Indeed they are the creatures and products of that system...For a technological determinist, whether of conservative or radical bent, the impact of technology looms large and the changes wrought are great...but I would take a different view...<sup>313</sup>

It was Raymond Williams who had earlier explored this fallacy of technological determinism, arguing against the direct impact of technology upon

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<sup>313</sup> Brian Winston, *Technologies of Seeing: Photography, Cinematography and Television* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), p. 7.

society. At the same time, he argued against a ‘symptomatic fallacy’ that assumes that technological development is the by-product of social forces having a quasi-accidental character. For him, the benefit of an argument that was capable of identifying the specificity of technology within the process of social change would:

...differ from technological determinism in that it would restore *intention* to the process of research and development...At the same time the interpretation would differ from symptomatic technology in that these processes and practices would be seen as *direct*: as known social needs, purposes and practices to which the technology is not marginal but central.<sup>314</sup>

However, for Williams, television was a medium that had a parasitical relationship to objective cultural products – news, artistic productions and films. Television had started without content and it could only produce content in the abstract process of transmission:

...radio and television were systems primarily devised for transmission and reception as abstract processes, with little or no definition of preceding content. When the question of content was raised, it was resolved, in the main, parasitically.<sup>315</sup>

This argument, similar to the one used earlier by Stuart Hall, ignores that there is a complex development to any technological ‘event’ and any parasitical relationship must be considered to be two-way. The use of colour film and lighting for television not only appropriated existing forms, but altered the norms associated with film-making inside television. In fact, the intentionality demonstrated in the use of film for television was the material deployment of the professional ideologies of film-making within and outside the electronic studio. These had sought, since the 1950s, to

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<sup>314</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1974), p. 14.

<sup>315</sup> Williams, *Television*, p. 25.



employ filmic techniques that could ‘enhance’ the script or else produce tangible effects on the programmes being made to create a televisual narrative space that combined notions of action and spectacle as well as filmic verisimilitude. At the same time, the hope that the electronic studio would be used less as a narrative space and more as an actor’s space is beyond the scope of this thesis, but is referred to later in regard to the uses of video by Troy Kennedy Martin to de-naturalise the image.

For British film-makers, such as Alan Parker, talking about television production up to the 1980s, television was aesthetically limited. According to Parker, the moving image mediums of cinema and television had not interacted, as suggested by the development of telefilms in the 1950s and 1960s, but simply co-existed and television had maintained its parasitical relationship to cinema. As part of its contribution to British Film Year in 1986, Thames Television had made three documentaries under the generic title, *British Cinema: A Personal View*. Parker was the subject of one of the three documentaries and explained his attitude to cinema and television:

The American director, D.W. Griffith, transformed the scale and scope of film. He realised that the enormous width of history could be shown on the movie screen...Now one of the problems, to my mind, of British movies is that most of our directors learn their trade on the small screen or the small stage... with a consequence that most contemporary British films have admirable depth but no cinematic width – what’s been called ‘talking heads’ cinema...<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Alan Parker quoted in John Hill and Martin McLoone (eds), *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations between Film and Television* (Luton: John Libbey Publishing, 1996), p. 78.

Martin McLoone argues that this contrasts the extremes rather than the characteristics of the two media – television at its least adventurous aesthetically.<sup>317</sup> The problem with Parker’s argument is that it only works if there is an essentialism between cinema and television. However, rather than saying television boxed in the cinematic, it would be more correct to say that television not only boxed in the cinematic but the use of film from the 1950s opened out the televisual experience when television drama ceased to be a live performance. The popularity of the Western in America and, from the moment *The Adventures of Robin Hood* became an instant hit, the adventure series in Britain gave to contemporary television audiences a sense of the ‘width’ championed by Parker. This was in sharp contrast to the confined world of the ‘live’ studio drama.

### **The Maximisation of Spatial Resources and the Use of Colour**

Jonathan Bignell has written how the ‘maximisation of spatial resources’, used to represent ITV’s corporate culture, demonstrated a commitment to mass entertainment within the adventure genre of the 1960s.<sup>318</sup> He has argued that the economic success and audience appeal of the transatlantic telefilm allowed for an internationalised television *mise-en-scène*. This was visible as early as ITC’s 1950s swashbuckling series and, from 1960, in *Danger Man*. Shot on 35mm film and not at ATV’s recently built Elstree television studios, but the nearby MGM Studios at Borehamwood, *Danger Man* made use of artificial backlots, back-projected simulations of space, and

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<sup>317</sup> Martin McLoone, ‘Boxed in? The Aesthetics of Film and Television’, in John Hill and Martin McLoone (eds), *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations between Film and Television* (Luton: John Libbey Publishing, 1996), pp. 76-106 (p. 81).

<sup>318</sup> Jonathan Bignell, ‘Transatlantic Spaces: Production, Location and Style in 1960s-1970s Action-adventure TV Series’, *Media History*, vol.16, no.1, February 2010, pp. 53-65 (p. 56).

location shooting.<sup>319</sup> Bignell argues that this was the start of a process in which the power to travel to and witness a real space on television co-existed with the simulation of spaces on a centralised production site such as at Borehamwood.<sup>320</sup>

Television was to bring the world into living rooms with travelogues but the early adventure series, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and Roger Moore's *Ivanhoe* (1958), had been shot in small 'B' movie studios such as Nettlefold/Walton Studios in Walton-on-Thames, now catering for television. These studios were very much the poor relation of places like Pinewood and Shepperton. Francis Matthews (who appeared in a number of episodes of *Robin Hood*) recalled that Nettlefold:

...was tiny and right in the middle of the town of Walton. At the back of some shops and round the other side of the houses there was this studio with a little entrance. There were two soundstages where you did interiors. And outside they'd bring in plants and artificial grass and you'd shoot there to save you going on location. They'd send a second unit out to do stock shots of riding horses. Most of the time Richard Greene [the star of *Robin Hood*] wouldn't be doing these, his double would be, and then they'd do the close-ups in Nettlefold with him bobbling up and down on an artificial horse...<sup>321</sup>

In order to produce a complete 30 minute episode every five days, art director Peter Proud took innovative short cuts. Instead of building multiple sets, he used stock items of scenery such as a baronial fireplace, a serf's hut, all mounted on wheels so that they could be rapidly placed into position. They could be used repeatedly, giving the impression that Richard Greene was racing into a variety of rooms and corridors, but in fact they were the same pieces of scenery rearranged differently.<sup>322</sup> Proud also

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<sup>319</sup> A few of the last episodes of series 2 and the whole of series 3 were filmed at Shepperton Studios.

<sup>320</sup> Bignell, 'Transatlantic Spaces', p. 62.

<sup>321</sup> Robert Sellers, *Cult TV: the Golden Age of ITC* (London: Plexus, 2006), pp. 20-21.

<sup>322</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV*, p. 22.

employed an authentic twenty-foot high hollow tree trunk mounted on wheels.<sup>323</sup> This was combined with another enormous oak made from wood and plaster, plus assorted hedges and rocks, which were strategically moved around to try and give the impression of a 'real' Sherwood Forest. Nevertheless, these shows began to look dated and parochial when seen against the use of location footage and backlots used in the new one hour Westerns coming out of America such as *Cheyenne* (1955-1963) made by Warner Brothers for ABC (US).

The simulation of space on film, eventually, came to be achieved because it was inscribed into the iconography of the genre as it developed – Patrick McGoochan's protagonist, John Drake, the hero of *Danger Man*, is frequently called upon to intervene in the internal politics of islands in the Caribbean and other exotic locations, and in the episode *Colonel Rodriguez* (1960), facilitates the release of a New York press correspondent from the island of Montique.<sup>324</sup> The exotic settings and place-names were capable of carrying resonances of the genre's epic space. However, what was evoked was an imaginative rather than an actual geography. The imaginative space was evoked through every aspect of costume, set design, and the use of stock footage, regardless of the budget restrictions.

Some of the origins of this can be traced to the World Events Editor of Associated-Rediffusion, Colin Willis, who was to produce a series for ITV called *The Wide World* in the 1950s that travelled to and prefigured many of the places that John Drake in fictional form would eventually visit. In an article in the *TV Times* he described the many exciting destinations he was inviting the viewer to share with him

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<sup>323</sup> Anon, 'The Accent is on Speed', *TV Times*, 15-21 October 1955, p. 6.

<sup>324</sup> *Danger Man*, 'Colonel Rodriguez', originally transmitted, 18 December 1960.

from Egypt to Cyprus.<sup>325</sup> Television had begun to bring into the living room documentaries and travelogues dealing with the wider world. Similarly, Ralph Smart, the creator of *Danger Man* would employ ‘pictorially interesting backgrounds to complement the show’s storylines’.<sup>326</sup> From week to week John Drake might be in Rome, New York or a Caribbean island and became the most travelled hero yet seen on TV.

It was only in 1960 that Ralph Smart, the producer of *Danger Man*, exploited the television audience’s new interest in exotic locales. Nick Freeman attributes this new interest to the growth of colour supplement and ‘glossies’ such as the *Sunday Times Colour Supplement* which began publication in February 1962.<sup>327</sup> Advanced forms of colour printing had been developed in America and could be seen in American periodicals. Unlike *Life* and *National Geographic*, British magazines had hitherto lacked the same techniques and graphic design. Peter Banham, an art theorist who was associated with the Independent Group, recalled:

One of the great trainings for the public’s eye was reading American magazines. We goggled at the graphics and the colour-work in adverts and appliances that were almost inconceivable in power-short Britain and food ads so luscious you wanted to eat them. Remember we had spent our teenage years surviving the horrors and deprivations of a six-year war...Those ads may look yucky now...but to us they looked like Paradise Regained...<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Colin Willis, ‘That’s My Wide World’, *TV Times*, 15-21 October 1955, pp. 8-9.

<sup>326</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV*, p.46.

<sup>327</sup> Nick Freeman, ‘See Europe with ITC: Stock Footage and the Construction of Geographical Identity’, in Deborah Cartmell, I.Q Hunter, Heidi Kaye, Imelda Whelehan (eds) *Alien Identities: Exploring Differences in Film and Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), pp.49-65, (p. 52).

<sup>328</sup> Peter Reyner Banham, ‘Fathers of Pop’, p. 5. Quoted in Anne Massey, *The Independent Group* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 84.

This was also the decade that would end with the beginning of leisure television programming such as *Holiday* (BBC1, 1969).

Moreover, at the same time that James Bond was making the spy a popular mythic figure, there was a growing fissure in crime-based shows into domestic police dramas, such as *Z Cars* (BBC 1962-78) and the detective-adventurer series. *Z-Cars* worked with ever increasing 'realistic' elements, including the use of 16mm film for its filmed inserts. The role of the detective-adventurer, however, could be seen in shows like *Danger Man* and *The Saint* and would be shot on 35mm film.

The characters of Simon Templar in *The Saint* and John Drake in *Danger Man* fulfilled the role of the adventurer cum detective. Templar and Drake were adventurers because they would try to do unusual things often in exotic locations. A series that was internationally set, and which offered the combined appeal of exotic 'colour' would become one of the defining narrative appeals of the adventure series of the 1960s. John Drake and Simon Templar were not tied to one place but could travel every week to a glamorous locale to solve a mystery puzzle. At the same time Roger Moore, playing Simon Templar, would often play him with much more humour than the books, which had portrayed Templar to be a much darker character. This allowed Moore to fully exploit what some commentators have labelled 'his pretty boy, chocolate charm.'<sup>329</sup> Narrative elements of sophistication, arch wit from McGoohan in *Danger Man* and Moore in *The Saint*, and glamour would be an integral part of the 'colourful' characters the audience were invited to share with weekly.

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<sup>329</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV*, p. 59.

A geographical flexibility allowed writers like Brian Clemens to employ plotlines with local colour, but it posed one overwhelming problem for television production: how to raise the necessary finance to afford location filming. The cinematic popularity of Bond was difficult for programmes like *Danger Man* to accommodate. One solution was to use library footage. For example, when in *The Honeymooners*, a Chinese business man is murdered and a young couple on honeymoon become the prime suspects, John Drake flies out to the Far East to assist them and the views of the Far East are taken from library footage.<sup>330</sup> In other episodes, Ralph Smart would continue to use this method to help create the exotic backgrounds that complemented the show's internationally set storylines. Drake became the most travelled hero on TV as one week he might be in the Far East, New York or an Arabian desert. In his analysis of *Danger Man*, David Buxton connects:

The positioning shots of London and other capitals like Cairo, Rome or Singapore which begin most episodes, perhaps intended to reinforce the difference between dangerous foreign cities and London...in which the foreign is a condition of excitement.<sup>331</sup>

Library footage was relatively inexpensive and had been used in advertising and cinema. It also allowed scene-setting with a minimum of exposition. However, it raised the problem of integrating it within a programme because it had the very obvious drawback that it could not feature the actors appearing within it, and there may have been an incongruous picture or technical quality between it and the main footage. Therefore, it had to remain as a scene setter, relegated to establishing shots. It was not a substitute for location shooting.

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<sup>330</sup> *Danger Man*, 'The Honeymooners', originally transmitted, 12 February 1961.

<sup>331</sup> David Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 92.

The aesthetics of place in *Danger Man* and other adventure series of the 1960s was also the relationship between the physical location of the popular television series made in the UK and the international trade in television fiction. Buxton quotes a line in *Danger Man* that helps to illustrate the simulation of space within this trade:

Most of the time, geography is just an illusion, features on a map, words on a stamp. That's all it takes to give a country its real identity. After all, you're in the country that you believe yourself to be in...countries are subjective things.<sup>332</sup>

How these series went further to set up a linkage between modernity and obsolescence on several levels is discussed in detail in chapter four. For the moment, these adventure series developed for television a distinctive generic style in which place and the movement between places became important attractions to the success of the series.

A series from the mid 1960s could be inscribed with another, less physical, more psychological movement from post-war austerity in Britain to a growing consumerism that signified a discourse about a growing colourful modernity away from the monochrome past. For example, *The Avengers* exemplified many of the technological changes in the television industry during the 1960s, moving from 'live' performance to film and from black and white to colour. It also exemplified stylistic changes that occurred in the adventure genre of popular television from a low-key, realist mode of representation to a more colourful, fantastic style that would become influenced by Pop Art and fashions by the mid to late 1960s. It was as a product of the 'high sixties' that *The Avengers* became most celebrated. After the creation of

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<sup>332</sup> *Danger Man*, 'Colony Three', originally transmitted, 27 October 1964. Quoted in Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, p. 89.



local 'colour' using geographical exoticism, it was the use of colour film that would draw further on the cultural meaning of 'swinging London'.

In America, colour programmes for television started to predominate from 1965-66, when the networks converted from black and white to all colour broadcasting. However, it is an over-simplification to equate the 1950s with monochrome austerity in Britain compared to the luxuriance of colour in the 1960s. Huw Wheldon of *Monitor*, the man who had encouraged the early Ken Russell to make his experiments in television style, voiced the one aesthetic principle which brought him back to a defence of black and white: 'I'll welcome colour when it has reached its full potentiality. In the meantime, *limitation is the friend of style.*'<sup>333</sup> [My italics]. Wheldon's remark can be understood to link style back to the time-based nature of television programmes; television's original ephemerality. Television, conceived in these terms, existed as a medium which, despite using similar production techniques as the cinema, avoided the cinema's expressive imagery. Yet colour seemed essential for the portrayal and marketing of 'Swinging London', a fact that executives, such as Lew Grade, quickly realised. But its visibility was slow and not universally accepted on British television.

The problem for British television in the mid 1960s was that it was still transmitting in monochrome on the 405 line EMI system and shooting on black-and-white film for export. Howard Thomas tells the story of how he and Bob Norris, a Californian living in England, working at ABC-TV, sold the last series of *The Avengers* on black and white to the Americans:

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<sup>333</sup> Huw Wheldon quoted in John Pearson, 'Carleton Greene: The Man with a Growing Empire', *Sunday Times Preview of Colour TV*, 1962, p. 9.

Norris and I found ourselves with...hurdles to overcome. The [*Avengers*] films were in black-and-white and the networks were insisting that all series now be filmed in colour. We talked our way out of this on the thin excuse that *The Avengers* would have the distinction of being the last TV series sold to America in monochrome. Our remaining hope had been to get the series into the network schedule during the summer months, when the regular programme series were off the air. Otherwise the only chance was that our series could be a replacement for one of the other new series which collapsed in the early months of a new season. ABC said they might be willing to take the first thirteen programmes on this basis in black-and-white. If...the series succeeded and they wanted more, then we would have to go into colour for the second thirteen.<sup>334</sup>

The series popularity meant that Thomas was able to film the fifth series in colour. It was ABC-TV's opinion that the popularity of *The Avengers* was due to 'enhanced production quality achieved through transferring the series to film [which had] undoubtedly been a major factor in the success of the new season'.<sup>335</sup>

By the end of 1966, the NBC network in America had declared that 96% of all its night-time programming would be in colour in spite of the fact that colour programming on average cost 20 percent more than black-and-white.<sup>336</sup> However, the use of colour was paying off. The Nielsen measurement showed that most of the top programmes were seen on NBC because of the innovation of using colour.<sup>337</sup> For British exporters, unable yet to show their programmes in colour on the 405 line system in the UK, colour film was still believed to be highly desirable because of the

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<sup>334</sup> Howard Thomas, *With an Independent Air: Encounters during a Lifetime of Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 193-4.

<sup>335</sup> Anon, 'Fourth *Avengers* is ABC's Most Successful Yet', *Television Mail*, 15 April 1966, p. 8.

<sup>336</sup> Anon 'US Scene', *Television Mail*, 5 November 1965, p. 6.

<sup>337</sup> Anon, 'Trendex Color Study Grants NBC 77% Advantage in Color Homes', *Variety*, 3 November 1965, p. 25. According to *Variety*, 'ABC ascribed the big NBC advantage to the fact that NBC has all of its regular nighttime shows...in color.'

emphasis on selling a programme to the US market which had converted to colour. Even some of the shows that would not be shot on film would be recorded simultaneously on 405 and 525 line video and in colour for the American market at ATV's new Elstree television studios.<sup>338</sup> For example, a series of *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* shows in 1966, hosted by Val Parnell, and produced by Lew Grade for ATV, were videotaped simultaneously in colour for America and black and white for the domestic market.<sup>339</sup> This temporarily complicates the idea that only film was exclusively used for exported programmes or that programmes were only shot on black and white.

Grade announced that by the beginning of 1967 everything would be made in colour regardless of whether it was on video or film. However, colour film would be reserved for his ITC shows.<sup>340</sup> Already, by the end of 1966, Grade had sent a plea to the Government to avoid the disaster which would result from confining colour to BBC2.<sup>341</sup> The plea was met with a response from the ITA that there was a much greater possibility that there would be 405 line colour, although they publicly stated that it would take two and a half years to re-engineer the existing 405 line equipment to transmit colour. However, the dependency on the export market, particularly on the three big American networks, meant that the use of colour would remain entirely based on a need to film for the American rather than domestic audience, since colour would have to wait in the UK.

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<sup>338</sup> Anon, 'Elstree Studios and Our Technical Story', *ATV Annual Report and Accounts*, 1961, p.7. The ATV studios at Elstree were expanded and considerably rebuilt for television in 1960-61.

<sup>339</sup> Anon, 'Grade Slates BBC and PMG over Colour Insult', *Television Mail*, 11 March 1966, p. 4.

<sup>340</sup> Anon, 'Lew Grade Has \$2 Million Sales Result from US Trip', *Television Mail*, 27 January 1967, p. 4.

<sup>341</sup> Anon, 'Lew Does It Again', *Television Mail*, 14 October 1966, p. 4.

Meanwhile, in 1967, ABC-TV's fifth series of *The Avengers* was promoted using a publicity campaign of 'Rule Britannia' using Macnee and Rigg in the Britannia pose accompanied by a Union shield. The linkage of patriotism, both inside and outside the programme, offered complex narrative codes that depended on an opposition of modernity and obsolescence. These represented, at the level of television trading, the earlier sense of modernity and an internationalised *mise-en-scène*, but with the addition of colour, the perception of Britishness, both at home and abroad. The system of production for many action-adventure shows had come to depend on a distinction between a 'here' – monochrome, British and relying on tradition, and a 'there' – exotic and with local 'colour'.

*The Avengers* achieved mass popularity in Britain and the US as it adopted a strategy to make visible the ideologies of consumerism and fashion; the use of Mrs Emma Peel became its main form of branding. By the late 1960s, the key aesthetic in a 'with-it' show was Pop Art. Diana Rigg became an international star as the enigmatic Emma Peel as the plots adopted a 'pop' strategy, although the characters maintained a cultural authenticity unlike the ITC characters in such shows as *Danger Man* and *The Champions* (1968-69), who often affected a mid-Atlantic accent. Yet, the use of colour in the adventure series had become an ideological engagement of cultural values and technical qualities that were in contradiction, if not in actual conflict, with domestic consumption, as British television strove to resist Americanisation on the one hand and celebrated a modern consumerism on the other.

It was this contradiction that Lew Grade himself recognised. In a press conference at ATV House, Birmingham, announcing details of his 1966 successful sale to the ABC (US) network of the television rights of some of ATV's most popular shows, he spoke about the failure to bring colour to British television. 'How

deplorable that other countries will see our programmes in colour and yet we in Britain will have to see them in black-and-white.’<sup>342</sup> Grade was able to link the technical quality of colour with the notion of television as both a commercial *and* cultural product. ‘British television, including the BBC, is the best broadcasting organisation in the world. I urge the Government to think of the future of television, particularly in colour...Colour [will] never get off the ground if ITV d[o] not get it at the same time as the BBC.’<sup>343</sup> Grade was angry that the BBC, he believed, had misled the Government about the use of colour. Speaking about the decision in 1966 to only allow BBC2 to transmit colour for as little as four hours a week, Grade was to say ‘One month from now, we at ATV could be putting out 20 hours of colour per week...I can only believe that the Government’s pronouncement was made in complete ignorance...and that they have been seriously misled by the BBC.’<sup>344</sup> *Television Mail* reported that Grade ‘could not understand how the Government and the BBC could have the impudence to insult the intelligence of the British public by offering four hours a week of colour.’<sup>345</sup>

By the mid 1960s, the discourse of ‘quality’ which had been represented by notions of class in *Colonel March* had to be also mediated by production values that were acceptable to worldwide and US audiences now used to watching a slickly edited and produced show shot on colour film. However, one benefit of the growing use of video in the early 1960s, according to Howard Thomas, the executive producer of *The Avengers*, had been to allow programme makers to ‘try out and tailor [the]

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<sup>342</sup> Anon, ‘Lew Grade Does It Again’, *Television Mail*, 10 June 1966, p. 8.

<sup>343</sup> Anon, ‘Lew Grade Does It Again’, p. 8.

<sup>344</sup> Anon, ‘Grade Slates BBC and PMG over Colour Insult’, *Television Mail*, 11 March 1966, p. 4.

<sup>345</sup> Anon, ‘Grade Slates BBC and PMG over Colour Insult’, p. 4.

videotaped series on the air.’<sup>346</sup> *The Avengers* was an example of a format which had been fashioned and re-cast on the air in front of the public because of video. Later, a series like *Callan* (1967-72) was also assessed from the viewpoint of world-wide potential after it had been shot on video. This raises the possibility that *Callan* would have gone from being a black and white videotaped show to a colour filmed series and been exported world-wide if it had been thought appropriate to do so by Thomas and the other executives at ABC-TV. The fact that the show was not chosen to be filmed raises questions about the criteria – generic, narrative and aesthetic - on which it was decided to film a series or else leave it to be videotaped and broadcast to a mainly domestic audience. This is discussed further in chapter five.

However, once the decision had been taken, to be a successful export globally a series had to be on film; by the mid to late 1960s, this meant colour film. The assigning of value to colour television and the part that this played in the thinking about a television aesthetic from the mid to the end of the 1960s raises the broader problem of popular aesthetics and authorship in British television. The use of place and colour and their deployment to articulate not only an emerging aesthetic within the adventure genre, but also a system of production organisation that depended on a complex set of circumstances, revealed that television was therefore not just an authorial, but an industrial, artefact.

A resort to mass production could create a tendency within TV programming towards the formulaic, but novelty within continuity could, at times, be maintained – we have seen how in the use of a narrative space that used ‘colour’ as part of its

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<sup>346</sup> Howard Thomas, ‘The Hard Facts about Producing Television Film Series’, *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.34, Winter 1968-69, pp. 14-15 (p.15).

internalised *mise-en-scène*. The mode of shooting on colour 35mm film became one novelty. Professional or occupational ideologies, borrowed from cinema, once adapted to an electronic medium within a particular television programme, became another.

### **Lighting the 1960s Telefilm**

Technical quality can function as the criterion for forming a category of value to be assigned to a particular programme and, in the 1960s, Howard Thomas, the producer of *The Avengers*, had given Julian Wintle, a theatrical film producer, the authority to make the series 'look right' and possess the same, or even superior, technical quality to Hollywood.<sup>347</sup> Yet a comparison that assigned value on this basis alone – as a series either shot on film or on video to become a comparison between prestigious and everyday drama - would be misleading. For example, in the 1960s, the production team for *The Avengers* was attempting to use a mode that incorporated the look of colour 35mm film in the drama field for a popular production, and it was here that there was a possible collision between the demands of the television flow and that of the film image.

The decision to shoot the fourth series of *The Avengers* on film in 1964 had led to a greater desire to use exterior shots. The enclosed production space of the television studio at Teddington was replaced with 'real spaces' by shooting either on location or else studio backlots at the Associated British Picture Corporation's Elstree

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<sup>347</sup> Howard Thomas quoted in Jonathan David Tankel, 'Program Production for Export and the Domestic Market', in Robert Thompson and Gary Burns (eds), *Making Television: Authorship and the Production Process* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1990), pp. 83-91 (p. 87).

Studios.<sup>348</sup> The tension between the script and the image and between the producer and the technicians on a TV programme, representing, at times, different aesthetic and technical priorities, can be seen in the making of the fifth colour season of *The Avengers* in 1967. It was at this point the show had already ceased to be shot on video and in black and white. The ‘old’ black and white video image had been updated by the ‘new’ colour film image. Yet the creation of the image was complicated by the production process.

An example of some of these problems was encountered by Alan Hume, who worked as lighting cameraman for *The Avengers* in 1967. One morning he had great hopes of capturing an early morning photographic effect because there was a great deal of lightish cloud with a touch of morning mist. By 11:30 am, after ten set-ups, the sun was breaking through and so he had to wait for the sun to cloud over to preserve some continuity in lighting. By 12:30 pm he had completely blue skies with brilliant sunshine and still had ten shots to get through:

It was out of the question to persuade the director to start another sequence and return to this one when the light was suitable...In the end, I shot the scenes with a Pola screen combined with either a No.1 or No.2 fog filter, in an effort to wash out the strong sunlight and keep the sequence looking as if it were shot in flat early morning lighting.<sup>349</sup>

This incident helps to illustrate how far a film crew would attempt to get the atmosphere that the script called for, even if it risked not meeting a schedule deadline. Many of the crew, including Hume, were proud that they did not settle for a scene that compromised on lighting, and was an ‘authentic’ interpretation of the script. This

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<sup>348</sup> ABPC was the parent company of ABC-TV.

<sup>349</sup> Alan Hume, ‘Filming for Colour Television Series’, *British Kinematography Sound and Television*. vol.50, no.1, January 1968, pp. 4-8 (p. 5).



diligence can perhaps be traced to the ‘professional’ qualities of a crew used to the high technical standards in the film industry. Almost everybody making films for television in the 1960s would have been using a familiar BNC Mitchell camera inside a studio, the standard blimp camera used by the film industry. Moreover, many of the locations in *The Avengers* episodes were shot entirely on a blimped 35mm Arriflex and the sense of shooting a ‘mini-movie’ using familiar equipment was felt by many of the crew producing filmed drama for TV.<sup>350</sup>

The script was often limited by the set design and lighting, but shooting on film with an experienced crew was very different from shooting in the television studio. For example, television engineers in the studio would strongly disapprove of brilliant whites and solid non-reflective blacks, especially if they were in large quantities, because they were of the opinion that the electronic signal of the TV system would not cope with highlights and lowlights. Hume comments that:

What, for example, looks more ludicrous than a person creeping about with a torch when there is so much light that you can see everything as clearly as in daylight? This sort of result is usually caused by the cameraman *thinking he must play safe, he probably being of the opinion that the T.V. system will not cope with dark, unlighted areas* [My italics]...there are surely times...one is getting good pictures which are interesting, or even exciting; the lighting is adding to the atmosphere and the suspense, and plays a very important part in helping the director and scriptwriter to put over their story and to make it more interesting’.<sup>351</sup>

The somewhat arbitrary and subjective limitations set by the studio engineers at Teddington studios, where the previous series of *The Avengers* had been shot, were

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<sup>350</sup> Hume, ‘Filming for Colour Television Series’, p.4.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., p.5.

absent when filming at Elstree and the lighting could be used, at times, to create a greater artistic effect.

The collaborative nature of film-making can allow a solution to a technical problem that can lead unexpectedly to the creation of an artistically more interesting scene content that differs from the subject matter of the script. Of course, the degree of difference can vary from a minor alteration to a complete break from the script. Hume makes it clear that on *The Avengers* a crew's overriding purpose was to maintain the integrity of the script and to serve it rather than alter or replace it. The desire to maintain the integrity of the script should not be understood as a slavish desire to keep to the exact nature and meaning of the written word, but a collaborative effort to use the available film technology to its maximum extent, including under very difficult lighting conditions. Whereas the electronic technology of the studio would be made subordinate to the script and invisible in order to disguise the technical nature of television - for example additional lighting might be added to avoid non-reflective blacks - a film crew's approach was on the whole more inventive than within the TV studio. The experience of shooting on *The Avengers* for Hume was that lighting would be carefully chosen for each set-up whereas in the television studio the set tended to be over-lit to avoid problems of continuity, and to placate the television engineers as they sought to apply the strict technical standards laid down by the television regulator.<sup>352</sup>

On film, if highlights were overexposed there was a characteristic 'burning' and blacks were left too dark to see any detail. Consequently, a lighting director

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<sup>352</sup> However, this is not to claim that stylised lighting was not possible in the studio, but it was more difficult generally. Chapman points out that some stylised lighting was used in series three of *The Avengers*. See Chapman, *Saints and Avengers*, p. 66.

working in TV would often be more cautious of bright or dark areas despite what his light meter might have to say. However, this possible conflict between the technical and the aesthetic could be put to good use during a certain type of action on film. If a character entered a dark room and shone a torch directly into another individual's face, the face would be allowed to 'burn out' so that there was hardly any visible detail. This would be contrary to the 'normal' rules of shooting on film for both TV and the cinema, but, says Hume, might be called artistic interpretation.<sup>353</sup>

The desire to create a 'film mode' for television to match the cinematic mode sprang from ideas to do with both technical and aesthetic quality that were chiefly informed in the 1960s by how 35mm film had been shot for the cinema and how it might be compared to the electronic broadcast image on television and its recorded equivalent on video. Its use revealed the highly collaborative way it was deployed to avoid unwanted lighting, principally unrealistic effects such as highlights and lowlights but, at other times, the desire to deploy stylised lighting. Cinematographers and lighting cameramen<sup>354</sup> were keen to retain continuity in the lighting, but they were often more adventurous with lighting than was possible under the watchful eye of the television engineer inside the studio. Much later in the 1970s, Alistair Reid, working for Euston Films, would make the same point by describing lighting in a television studio as 'all heavy, top lighting' avoiding any artistic possibility.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Hume, 'Filming for Colour Television Series', p. 6.

<sup>354</sup> Gendered pronouns are used because of the nature of television production crewing meant that it was at the time overwhelmingly male dominated.

<sup>355</sup> Alistair Reid quoted in Manuel Alvarado and Edward Buscombe, *Hazell* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), p. 191. However, it should be remembered that the lighting for a studio using a multi-camera technique was also designed to avoid having boom shadows in shot.

## Celluloid Television and its Usages in the 1970s

During the 1970s, with the growing ascendancy of video, film became more of an old-fashioned, outdated and messy medium. And yet, it refused to disappear. Indeed, it continued to fulfil the needs of the programme makers by producing a 'high quality' product which allowed the programme maker to work unconstrained by the many technical parameters caused by shooting on video in a studio that limited their creative ability. By the end of the 1970s, out of a BBC production total of 12,000 hours per year, 35% was live, 40% was produced on tape, and 25% was produced on film.<sup>356</sup> Already, by the early 1960s, the television camera was not much bulkier and no less manoeuvrable than a 35mm film camera. The key difference between an electronic camera and a film camera was that a mass of cables had to be run from the television camera to the portable monitors and the Ampex equipment used to videotape the programme. This tended to impose limits on how the electronic television camera might be used, especially on location. Moreover, with videotape (Sony's U-matic format from 1971) there was never any possibility that the picture quality could approach the richness of 35mm film.<sup>357</sup>

By the mid 1970s the notion of 'good television' had been equated by Stuart Hall with 'professional' and high technical standards.<sup>358</sup> For Hall, this would serve television's need to fulfil its commitment to mass entertainment without the distraction of a low quality picture that would continue to suggest an invisible

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<sup>356</sup> D. J. Kimbley, 'Survival of Celluloid in the Age of Microelectronics', *Television: the Journal of the Royal Television Society*, September/October 1981, pp. 21-25 (p. 22).

<sup>357</sup> Mike Jones, *The Sony Guide to Audio and Video Recording* (Slough: Sony UK Limited, 1982), pp. 77-78.

<sup>358</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Television and Culture', *Sight and Sound*, vol.45, no.4, Autumn 1976, pp. 246-252 (p. 250). Hall is discussing the apparent transparency of the television studio.

technical medium to an audience.<sup>359</sup> In 1976, Brian Clark, a BBC producer, sat on the jury at the Royal Television Society to choose the best single play from a shortlist comprised of four – all on film – which represented, probably, at most, ten percent of the ‘single play’ drama output of British television. They were all filmed single plays, and the small percentage of British drama output that happened to be on film also happened to be those that the viewers liked best. For Peter Eckersley, also on the panel, this wasn’t a coincidence. ‘...production standards have gone up enormously and one can’t get away with things that don’t look very good. For the panel, ‘The best single play year after year is on film, but not with the serials. Amongst the serials, all four of them were largely studio.’<sup>360</sup> The studio had been the only affordable and viable method in the 1950s of recording the majority of drama until the introduction of 16mm film and, by the end of the 1970s, drama production had moved decisively towards film. The fact that it was shot on film initiated a marked rise in production values, the amounts expended on the look, feel and atmosphere of a ‘realistic’ drama shot on location compared to a studio based drama from the 1960s.

During the 1970s studio production was abandoned except for routine drama productions such as *Coronation Street*. As John Ellis remarks, ‘...as late as 1971, studio production was still the natural choice for a prestige series like *Upstairs, Downstairs* [produced by London Weekend Television], which ran until 1975.’<sup>361</sup> The opinions of the people involved in the making of *Upstairs, Downstairs* are

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<sup>359</sup> Hall, ‘Television and Culture’, p. 250.

<sup>360</sup> ‘Is There a Future for the Single Play?’ - a special panel discussion organised by the *RTS London Centre*. James Cellan-Jones, Head of Plays (Drama), BBC Television, chaired the panel. *Television: The Journal of the Royal Television Society*, vol.16, no.11, September-October 1977, p. 19.

<sup>361</sup> John Ellis, ‘Importance, Significance, Cost and Value: is an ITV Canon Possible?’, in Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (eds), *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), pp. 36-56 (p. 50).

interesting because they demonstrate how the institutional constraints of the electronic studio were interpreted by the production team during the early 1970s just prior to the formation of Thames Television's Euston Films: Director Derek Bennett and playwright Fay Weldon felt the final result inclined too much towards pure entertainment. Jean Marsh, whose idea it was, was disappointed that the series couldn't have been done more in a 'documentary' style.<sup>362</sup>

The play that marked, if not the end of the studio play, then the possibilities of using 16mm film extensively outside the electronic studio, was *Up the Junction* (BBC, 1965) directed by Ken Loach. It was enthusiastically welcomed by Troy Kennedy Martin, who was later to write for Euston Films, and he explained why the 'New Drama' had to embrace new technology and move away from the constraints and confines of the electronic studio:

With conceptions as complex as Ken Loach is trying to realise, a director cannot cue in and out three sound tracks and the cameras and run in telecine with dead accuracy over the period of an hour or so. Such orchestration requires physical facilities – superhuman responses, as well as studio time – which he has not got. The only solution is the possibility of subsequent editing afforded by telerecording.<sup>363</sup>

In order to make a drama about contemporary life in south London, Loach and Tony Garnett, the programme's script editor, wanted to get out onto the streets, into the real world. The solution was to use 16mm film cameras. The logic of using 16mm film depended on a desire to include observational detail of the external world outside the studio. About the same time as the making of *Special Branch* by Euston

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<sup>362</sup> Anon, 'Production Casebook, No. 6, *Upstairs, Downstairs*: London Weekend Drama Series', *Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 6, April-June 1972, pp. 26-38 (p. 38).

<sup>363</sup> Troy Kennedy Martin, 'Up the Junction and after', *Contrast*, vol.4, no. 5/6, Winter 1965/Spring 1966, pp. 139-140 (p. 140).

Films, Tony Garnett, who had worked on *Up the Junction*, and was working at the BBC, explained that:

The whole logic of scripts we were getting was forcing us to use film and to shoot outside the studios on location. We were interested in social forces and the fabric of people's lives and the kind of conflicts that go on particularly at places of work...So we started to push for film...moving onto a fresh scene whenever the content dictated it...The odd eyebrow was raised because we were filming on 16mm equipment and...proper films were made with 35mm cameras – 16mm was all right for news, but it wasn't Art.<sup>364</sup>

The increasing use of 16mm film, the desire for greater 'authenticity' in drama by Jean Marsh, and, equally, among the production team at Euston Films, people such as the director Jim Goddard and producer Ted Childs, would correct the tendency that identified the studio with producing entertainment.<sup>365</sup>

But there was also a second tendency for 'quality' drama to align itself with the cinema. By the mid-1980s, a series like *Upstairs, Downstairs* would have been shot on film, argues John Ellis, as were ITV series such as the prestigious *Jewel in the Crown* (1984).<sup>366</sup> A quality serial that embodied notions of 'art' and 'significance' such as *Jewel* and Euston Films' adventure serial, *Reilly: Ace of Spies* (1983) produced the 'look' and 'feel' that audiences by that time would have expected. John Walker, cameraman on the BBC's detective series *Shoestring* (1979) was to say 'The film camera goes where the viewer will be and captures the atmosphere. It is more

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<sup>364</sup> Roger Hudson interviews Tony Garnett and John Gould, 'Television in Britain', *Theatre Quarterly*, vol.2, no.6, April-June 1972, pp. 18-25 (p. 20).

<sup>365</sup> This was more fully explained by Ken Loach who wanted to film in 'real-time' in order to avoid the need to compress a story that could be told in say 75 minutes. Instead, he wanted to use the space outside the studio by shooting on 16mm film in order not to be tied to the need to select and juxtapose scenes together. See Ken Loach, 'Film Versus Tape in Television Drama', *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.23, Spring 1966, pp. 10-12.

<sup>366</sup> John Ellis, 'Importance, Significance, Cost and Value: is an ITV Canon Possible?', p. 50.

real on film.’<sup>367</sup> Derek Granger, the producer of *Brideshead Revisited* (1981) agreed: ‘[Film] provides us with a depth of feeling, the realness that we are seeking. It has a feather-like quality that video doesn’t have...Aesthetically, video is a coarse medium, very suitable for some types of production but totally inappropriate for this one.’<sup>368</sup> In these comments there was an implicit hierarchy of mediums on television and an argument for the ascendancy of film.

It can be argued that a concern for the international media market and an indigenous ‘realistic’ style inter-reacted during the 1970s and marked a shift in the style of British television dramas, much as ITC had done in the 1960s with shows such as *Danger Man* that had been intended for both a domestic and international audience, but ran the risk of becoming transatlantic. By the early 1980s, 16mm film was being used to shoot ‘quality’ action drama such as Euston’s *Reilly: Ace of Spies*, ostensibly a glamorous adventure serial, but which was able to deploy both realistic settings and lavish period detail.

### **Picture Quality: Gritty Realism and Euston Films in the 1970s**

A sense of ‘novelty’ in television that broke from the everyday was achieved in, for example, the use of physical violence in *Special Branch* (Euston Films, 1973-74). It was reinforced by the aesthetic of gritty realism shot on 16mm in many of the action-adventure programmes made by Euston in the UK during the 1970s, especially, in the first half of that decade. To understand how these aesthetic debates in Britain took on a particular character, and how the ‘televisual imagination’ changed and developed in

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<sup>367</sup> John Walker quoted in D. J. Kimbley, ‘Survival of Celluloid in the Age of Microelectronics’, *Television: the Journal of the Royal Television Society*, September/October 1981, pp. 21-25 (p. 21).

<sup>368</sup> Derek Granger quoted in Kimbley, ‘Survival of Celluloid in the Age of Microelectronics’, p. 22.



relationship to the institution's (Thames TV) economic and strategic needs after the transatlantic success of *The Avengers* by its predecessor, ABC-TV, it is necessary to consider again the technology of film and its specificity to television, and how the use of film in television drama was regarded by those working at Euston Films.

From the early 1970s, shooting on 16mm film became the norm for the single play on British television and the series drama that was to follow.<sup>369</sup> However, the use of 16mm was to differ from the telefilms of the 1960s, shot on 35mm film, whose roots can be found more in low and medium budget genre film production. A tendency towards commercialism in British television represented by the export of recorded programmes for overseas markets in the 1960s has to be set within the context of an indigenous economy of television production, often within the television studio, that popularised a range of dramatic and artistic styles for a wider national audience in the 1960s and 1970s. The apparent diversity and eclecticism of drama on film from Euston Films in the 1970s, therefore, requires more careful examination.

By the late 1960s, the use of 16mm filming was not much more costly than studio videotape recording (VTR)<sup>370</sup> and this meant that production crews could use ACTT (Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians) minimum crewing rather than feature film crewing with 35mm.<sup>371</sup> The use of 16mm film had

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<sup>369</sup> Dave Rolinson, 'Play for Today (1970-84)' <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/454719/>> [accessed January 2011].

<sup>370</sup> Roger Hudson, *Theatre Quarterly*, vol.2, no.6, April-June 1972, pp. 18-25 (p. 20). Hudson makes this point writing in 1972.

<sup>371</sup> Anon, 'Report No.238: Cost Comparison between Film and OB Inserts', 23 June, 1970. IR36: Film Dept. 67-73, British Film Institute, Thames Television Collection.

The figures confirm a situation that the production of a long programme sequence on film was more expensive than video-tape. Thus, a 2 minute insert showed a real advantage for film, while at 7 minutes, the total costs were nearly identical. Above this duration, the OB unit method would become more economic. However, less film personnel were required. An average film crew consisted of 7 people introducing a considerable saving. The programme being examined here was *Special Branch*.

first been used for news and documentaries and not drama and had made possible rapid cutting from scene to scene and shot to shot; the encapsulation of action and elimination of linking scenes. 16mm film for television drama was seen to be suitable to represent contemporary Britain:

...as progress towards a more authentic depiction of reality. A marked preference for film among television drama producers [from the 1970s] resulted, and film has since been characteristically regarded as free from certain technical and institutional constraints of the electronic studio.<sup>372</sup>

It was Chris Burt, one of Euston Films' first employees, who noted that directors at Euston usually came from television rather than feature films. 'By using television-orientated people we got more realism and they were much quicker and more used to cutting corners'.<sup>373</sup> If the transatlantic telefilm market is important in understanding television history in the 1960s, it should not be forgotten that the original method of working with film in much of television had depended on the news and documentary tradition, as Ted Childs acknowledged when discussing the first show that Euston Films produced for ITV, *Special Branch*:

I brought in directors I'd worked with, some with a documentary background, and really what we tried to do was incorporate the 'wobbly-scope' techniques of 16mm film-making into a drama situation. This is what Mike Hodges [one of Euston's first directors] had previously done, coming as he did from *World in Action*.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Bob Millington and Robin Nelson, *Boys from the Blackstuff: Making a TV Drama* (London: Comedia, 1986), p. 15.

<sup>373</sup> Chris Burt quoted in Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made for Television: Euston Films Limited* (London: British Film Institute in association with Thames Television International, 1985), p. 47.

<sup>374</sup> Ted Childs quoted in Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, p. 48.

The use of 16mm to achieve the look of ‘immediacy’ that was found in documentaries, especially *World in Action*, would influence the style and content of some early dramatic productions by Thames Television as a precursor to Euston Films, especially *Rumour*<sup>375</sup> and *Suspect*<sup>376</sup>, directed by Mike Hodges.<sup>377</sup>

Jamie Sexton has pointed out that the difficulty of using 16mm for television drama was its association with amateurism.<sup>378</sup> Although increasingly professionalised by continued technical improvements, it was believed to be an amateur gauge because of its low image resolution. 16mm film was used more frequently in news and current affairs, but continued to be avoided in the recording of drama because the technical quality of the image in drama was believed to be important due to its aesthetic requirements.

In the early 1970s, the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (1973) gave the IBA (1972-90) the responsibility for the technical quality of the TV signal broadcast. ‘The function of the Authority shall be to provide...television [services]...of high quality, both as to the transmission and as to the matter transmitted’.<sup>379</sup> This requirement was largely achieved by the issue of a Code of Practice document and confirmed that equipment was operating at a high standard, although the actual quality could depend on many other factors, for example, how the equipment was used and which team was working on the production. International

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<sup>375</sup> *ITV Playhouse*, ‘Suspect’, originally transmitted 17 November 1969.

<sup>376</sup> *ITV Playhouse*, ‘Rumour’, originally transmitted 2 March 1970.

<sup>377</sup> It was only in 1964 that *World in Action* became connected with ‘direct cinema’ after producing *Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! New York Meets the Beatles*, transmitted, 11 February 1964.

<sup>378</sup> Jamie Sexton, ‘Televite Hits Britain: Documentary, Drama and the Growth of 16mm Filmmaking in British Television’, *Screen*, vol. 44, no. 4, Winter 2003, pp.429-444 (p. 431).

<sup>379</sup> Tom Robson, Bob Longman and David Reay, ‘Picture Quality: the Arguments’, *Television: Journal of the Royal Television Society*, January/February 1982, pp.3-7 (p. 3).

agreement on the *subjective* assessment of the technical quality of television programmes had, by the early 1980s, resulted in a five point scale: 'excellent', 'good', 'fair', 'poor', and 'bad'. The Authority normally set a minimum subjective quality that could be described as 'fair'.<sup>380</sup> T.S. Robson, the Director of Engineering at the IBA in the early 1980s, described how a training tape showing examples of the five grades would be assessed and agreed to by all ITV company engineers. Each grade would show varying degrees of degradation caused by film blemishes, grain, lack of definition and other defects. A grade of 'good' would show defects that 'are not disturbing, whereas a grade of 'fair' has blemishes that are slightly disturbing'.<sup>381</sup>

Robson argued that studio cameras and 35mm film could give:

...top class technical quality. Unfortunately, 16mm film cannot achieve a technical quality that may be classed as 'excellent' and unless the greatest care is taken to achieve ideal conditions, the technical quality is likely to be nearer 'fair' than even 'good'.<sup>382</sup>

He concluded that 16mm film had only been used in the past for reasons of cost and the technical results were not usually satisfactory.

Yet the use of a *verité* documentary technique was one that was consciously chosen to appear in Euston Films' *Special Branch* and this, as much as the fact it was shot entirely on location, was used to distinguish the style in *Special Branch* from earlier filmed drama such as the action-adventure shows produced by ITC in the 1960s at the Elstree studios. However, there was hostility shown by the IBA about the technical quality of shows from Euston. As we have seen on page 169, the supervising editor, Chris Burt, noted that Euston directors usually came from

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<sup>380</sup> Robson, Longman and Reay, 'Picture Quality: the Arguments', p. 3.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., p 4.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

television because ‘they got more realism...’ and were more used to cutting corners.<sup>383</sup> The use of 16mm film and ‘wobbly-scope’ reflected a desire to employ a production method that was distinct from the one that had hitherto existed in the 1960s telefilm.

It was because production had switched from film production for the cinema to television that filming techniques were not only adapted to television, but were later used to devise television’s own modalities by employing both 35mm and 16mm film. Yet, the IBA during the 1970s continued to insist that 16mm film would not work in drama. Programmes shot on 16mm film were considered to be distinct from cinema films and made to occupy a different aesthetic space between the cinema film and the studio-bound ‘live’ television drama. This sometimes had a profound impact on the look of the finished programme, much to the dissatisfaction of the production team. Ted Childs, commenting on the technical quality of the first series of *The Sweeney*, complained that:

We weren’t using zooms enough, we were using fixed lenses. They didn’t have the super speed lenses, so we were constrained and I think a lot of it looks much prettier than it should but that was because the quality control people at the IBA insisted that 16mm wouldn’t work in drama.<sup>384</sup>

The mock documentary look of *Special Branch* was an attempt to create not so much a greater realism as a *gritty* realism. The choice of 16mm film raised the issue as to whether both technical and aesthetic quality, judged in institutional/economic terms, and of the authorship of the producer or director, were in conflict or could be

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<sup>383</sup> Chris Burt quoted in Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, p. 47.

<sup>384</sup> Ted Childs quoted in Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, p. 66.

reconciled and made to interact. For example, in a fast moving and exciting scene, the content of a show could predominate, such as a car chase in *Special Branch*. The viewer was expected to concentrate more on the narrative events, in which case, technical quality could take second place to action and audiences might be prepared to accept more film defects. They might not notice that the aesthetic of film and technical quality (low lighting, poor definition) were in conflict; the action codes that signify 'grittiness' if they were sufficiently distracted by the content. At the same time, technical quality and aesthetic style could be reconciled and made to interact if the director needed to develop a mood or wished to have a particular dramatic effect and the film 'defects' of low lighting and poor definition were not so they detracted from the programme's interest.

This complicates Stuart Hall's belief that 'good television' relied on a 'professional' mode that foregrounds content and always makes invisible the technical nature of a programme.<sup>385</sup> The dilemma faced by directors and producers working at Euston Films was whether to agree with the IBA engineering definition of quality or find some other more 'artistic' definition of quality. Both were subjective categories as the IBA itself admitted, although it hoped they could be used to form standards that were widely agreed upon.<sup>386</sup>

Television, particularly as it converted to colour in the late 1960s, demanded both portable lighting and fast colour film emulsions. The high quality photographic definition that film-makers had invested in, particularly since the adoption of wide screen formats in the 1950s at the cinema, was replaced with a concern for colour

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<sup>385</sup> Hall, 'Television and Culture', pp. 246-252.

<sup>386</sup> Robson, Longman and Reay, 'Picture Quality: the Arguments', p. 6.

emulsions that could react to light and be processed at maximum speed. New lighting systems appeared that could cope with the 'go anywhere-anytime' needs of television news and documentary film, and would later be used in drama. For some, the result was detrimental to 'true' film-making:

Throughout the film making world, be it Hollywood, New York, London, Paris, Rome or Japan, we seem to have bred a class of film maker who is content to take TV film techniques and apply them to feature films. This, in its turn, is feeding back on TV production, particularly commercials, with unfortunate results.<sup>387</sup>

Despite these concerns, from the mid 1960s the technology of 35 and 16mm film was adapted to television as that medium became the principal user of celluloid rather than the cinema. New film stocks meant that colour and print density were produced for television. On British television, there had been a steady annual increase in the use of film since the 1970s. The amount of raw film stock used and actually transmitted by 1980, allowing for shooting ratios of between 7:1 and 20:1, would have made 2,150 average length feature films.<sup>388</sup>

A conflict between the technical and the aesthetic arose from the use of film on television, but is also a core issue of television itself. Television is a medium that, rather than being 'abstracted', depends on a sophisticated use of technology.

Raymond Williams establishes that television technology was originally designed to offer a television image promising immediacy. However, television's original relay function is, argues Williams, the example of a specific technology utilising a cultural

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<sup>387</sup> Anon, 'Have You Seen Your Latest Commercial at the Cinema Recently', *Broadcast*, 20 September 1976, pp. 66-67 (p. 66).

<sup>388</sup> D. J. Kimbley, 'Survival of Celluloid in the Age of Microelectronics', *Television: the Journal of the Royal Television Society*, September/October 1981, pp. 21-25 (p. 22).

form and remaking it as television.<sup>389</sup> Therefore, to understand the ideological messages of television, it is necessary to examine it through the mutual determinations of technology and cultural forms. Accordingly, technology is the ensemble of practices circulating through a historical situation.

The conflict of interests between television as an electronic medium and the programme makers using film led to a diversity of forms being used in British television drama in the 1970s serving both public service and commercial interests by dispensing ideological messages that were sometimes in conflict. The perception of 16mm as a middle ground between the cinema film and studio-bound 'live' TV drama, and video as technically inferior to film, highlighted not only the limits of style in television, but also how new dramatic forms came to be created during the final period being examined.

### **Celluloid Culture and the Audio-Visual**

In a home market, and a fast-developing international market, the elimination of mistakes during the broadcast of a programme that videotape editing could offer had obvious advantages. 'Recording before transmission allowed studio faults to be corrected and all material to be post-edited in the cutting-room.'<sup>390</sup> In the course of the 1960s, the transmission of live fictional material practically ceased. It became normal procedure to record onto video intermittently, rather than in one continuous take, and to re-order material after the event. Electronic studio television was moving closer to the ability of film to record and re-sequence material, and there was a

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<sup>389</sup> Williams, *Television*, pp. 19-31 and p. 56, in which Williams specifically discusses drama on television.

<sup>390</sup> Michael Barry, *From the Palace to the Grove* (London: Royal Television Society, 1992), p. 174.



parallel growth in the actual use of film within television. Denis Forman points to these two developments – videotape editing, and the use of the film camera – as happening simultaneously.<sup>391</sup> The question that was faced in the 1960s was not whether video was more efficient than film, but how far should VTR be used to ‘open out’ a TV play by adopting some of film’s visual vocabulary?

Initially, Troy Kennedy Martin believed a ‘new drama’ for TV could be achieved in the television studio rather on film because he believed that naturalism as a dramatic form had visually evolved from Hollywood film techniques.<sup>392</sup> Yet, as we have seen, it was Ken Loach’s *Up the Junction*, a *Wednesday Play* in November 1965, making extensive use of 16mm and film editing techniques, that marked the shift to film as the preferred medium for social realist drama which had begun in the 1960s with the filmed inserts in popular shows such as *Z-Cars*. However, twenty years later, in his MacTaggart lecture at the 1986 Edinburgh Television Festival, Kennedy Martin felt that his attack on the dramatic style of naturalism remained valid, and cited the role of technological developments over this period as being crucial to naturalism’s dominance.

One of the perennial problems we have had to face every time we have been confronted with a situation which calls for *imaginative change* is that we are let off the hook by new technological developments which allow the old way of doing things just a little more life. We started in the drama studio with black-and-white, then went onto colour, then out into the streets with mobile tape, then film, then Super-16, then faster film, then 35mm...At each stage, when the process should have been thrown back onto the virtuosity of its

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<sup>391</sup> Denis Forman, ‘Television in 1959’, in Edward Buscombe (ed), Dossier No.9: *Granada the First 25 Years* (London: British Film Institute, 1981), p. 60.

<sup>392</sup> Troy Kennedy Martin, ‘Nats Go Home: First Statement of a New Drama for Television’, *Encore*, no.48, March/April 1964, pp. 21-33 (p. 25).

creators, the new development has allowed the Establishment to keep pumping out the same old naturalistic tune.<sup>393</sup>

In other words, Kennedy Martin was asking whether there would be a phenomenological use of audiovisual space rather than an aesthetic use of moving images. However, by the 1970s the sharpness of the video image was often declared to be better than 16mm film.<sup>394</sup> Videotape had more resolution, and consequently the image was sharper than film projected on a broadcast TV system. Video was an electronic medium that had been constantly developed for an electronic system in the same way that film had been originally designed for big screen front projection but, conversely, many electronic cameras were fitted with film lenses in order to make use of scrims, diffusers, nets, and the short depth of field that had been traditionally used on film cameras.<sup>395</sup> Instead of an electronic method of recording and a celluloid method of filming there was a convergence between an electronic and film medium. The sharpness of the image from a video camera could suggest liveness unlike film, but increasingly video was used like film with the aid of film lenses to become more of a sophisticated or complex aesthetic medium that could be compared to the use of film at the cinema.

Professional film-making ideologies also resisted the use of video and the world of the televisual, preferring instead the world of film. Many TV commercial producers, like drama directors, preferred to forgo the see-it-now, quick turnaround

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<sup>393</sup> Troy Kennedy Martin, 'Sharpening the Edge of TV Drama' (an edited version of the MacTaggart lecture), *The Listener*, 28 August 1986, p.12.

<sup>394</sup> Professor W. D. Wright, 'Picture Quality – The Continuing Challenge Towards Visual Perfection', Shoenberg Memorial Lecture, Royal Institution, London, 6 December 1976, published in *Television*, vol. 16, no 7. Jan/Feb 1977, pp. 6-10.

<sup>395</sup> Morton Dunn, 'Commercials', *Broadcast*, 26 April 1976, pp. 14-15 (p.15).

advantages of video tape production because the final picture did not look like film: it was too crisp, too sharp, and probably most damning of all, too 'realistic'. For example, Television International, a large VTR London facilities house in the 1970s, did a substantial trade in video tape facilities for the commercial production industry. In their market research they discovered that the objection to VTR by advertising agencies and the directors employed by them was because of its 'realistic' image and why so few 'up-market' commercials were produced on tape.<sup>396</sup>

While VTR had all the advantages claimed for it, possibly shortening the time from preproduction to transmission from four to six weeks in film to five to seven days for a complex VTR commercial, it was resisted because it was unable to provide the 'mood' aesthetics using the focal plane for which film was widely cherished. For example, despite its 'gritty realism', one of the key scenes of the *Special Branch* episode, *Double Exposure*,<sup>397</sup> was shot so that the qualities of high-end photographic images, such as shallow depth of field used in advertising, could be used. These would be deployed to create mood by a close observation of the interplay of the characters without the need to rely on too many close-ups and a continued sense of place in the background.

### ***Hazell: Inside the TV Studio***

In 1977, Thames Television produced *Hazell*, a programme in the tradition of the private eye adventure series, which could have been more suitably shot on film by Euston Films. It is interesting to examine the tension between shooting on video

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<sup>396</sup> Anon, 'TVI Makes a "Film" Commercial on Video Tape to Prove Its Point', *Broadcast*, 30 August 1976, p. 22.

<sup>397</sup> *Special Branch*, 'Double Exposure', originally transmitted, 14 February 1974.

inside the studio by this stage and the desire by many of its directors to shoot on film. The constraints felt by the production staff suggests that Thames' promise of mass-entertainment could function as a site for formal experimentation as it had for its predecessor during the 1960s, but this was felt, by the mid 1970s, to be difficult inside the electronic studio and recording onto videotape. The television space was becoming a space of low differentiation and particularity.

There were six technical supervisors at Teddington Studios and two studio supervisors, sometimes called the 'super-tec'. The studio supervisor became involved at a pre-production stage; the technical supervisor became involved at the production stage. On the first series of *Hazell*, the studio supervisor was Del Randall. The problems of finding a unified style for *Hazell* appeared to have been to do with how production in the television studio was organised as well as technical constraints. One of the things to remember is that the technical crew in the studio would not meet in any way and would only liaise with one another through the producer. At times, a lack of style in *Hazell* can be blamed on the industrial form of production at Teddington that prohibited a more 'authorial' approach compared to a film crew at Euston Films. Discussing the failed use of stylised lighting in *Hazell*, Randall explained that one problem was 'because of the fact that you have programmes which come before and programmes which come after, so you have that sort of whole flow of programmes and there is that sense of keeping, maintaining a certain sort of quality of colour and consistency...' <sup>398</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Del Randall, unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado. British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p. 10.

Here we have industry recognition of the idea of flow, and as a contribution to it, during exterior filming, there was a separate lighting cameraman who, in all likelihood, would never meet the lighting director responsible for lighting the studio. This lack of liaison meant that the lighting cameraman on the film sequences, who was part of a different crew, would probably go for a fairly bland look rather than anything very strongly stylised, for fear that he should produce something totally out of keeping with what would happen in the studio. The problems of continuity can be seen materially in *Hazell*: ‘...You get a difference as soon as you cut from say Hazell walking up to a [outside] door, and then cut to the studio, the quality of lighting is so different, it’s really embarrassing, it’s visually upsetting...’ explained the director Don Leaver.<sup>399</sup>

In the first episode of the first series, *Hazell Plays Solomon*, Hazell walks into a block of GLC owned flats to visit the Avery family living on the seventh floor.<sup>400</sup> The exterior of the flat is shot on 16mm film and conveys a sense of urban blight with out of order lifts and bored and potentially dangerous youngsters sitting on the concrete stairs inside the block. The lighting is natural but used to good effect: the set mostly in half-shadow. The dubbed-on mournful sound of the wind helps to reinforce the lighting code of desolation and isolation. However, the interior scenes of the Avery flat, Hazell’s office, his flat, another office inhabited by his employer, are typical of the high-key, top-down lighting of the studio with none of the possibilities of expressive lighting that the producer of the show, June Roberts, had hoped for. Later, a brief scene of the interior of Hazell’s car makes clear the lack of realism: the

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<sup>399</sup> Don Leaver, director, unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado. British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection. Tape 1, side 2 transcription, undated, p. 16.

<sup>400</sup> *Hazell*, ‘Hazell Plays Solomon’, originally transmitted, 16 January 1978.

scene is generally over-lit and there are obvious highlights on shiny pieces of metal on the car making it impossible to believe that the characters are anywhere except sitting inside a studio. However, the aim was not to reveal the artifice of the studio, but conceal it.

With the use of 16mm film to shoot drama, there was much debate within television as to the relative advantage of using film. Many directors on *Hazell* were said to prefer to work on film because it allowed them to set up each shot separately and, in particular, to arrange the lights in the best way for each single shot.<sup>401</sup> By working on tape in the studio they were obliged to light a scene in a way that would suit three or four cameras shooting from different angles simultaneously – a studio multi-camera setup. Alistair Reid, one of the directors on *Hazell*, resisted this by asking for a portable video camera, although often the length of time available in the studio – two days per episode in the case of *Hazell* - did not permit individual set-ups.<sup>402</sup> One advantage of film to directors was that during shooting they could be close to the actors. In the studio, working on tape, though the director would normally be on the floor for the camera rehearsals, his or her presence was necessary in the gallery during the actual take because it was the only place the director could see how the shots were being mixed together.

Reid usually shot everything in the studio in single takes or on one camera. During the making of *Hazell Pays a Debt* he had only one hand-held camera but used it a lot, placing it in all sorts of strange places.<sup>403</sup> Thus when using it he shot as if he

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<sup>401</sup> Manuel Alvarado and Edward Buscombe, *Hazell* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), p. 39.

<sup>402</sup> Alvarado and Buscombe, *Hazell*, p.190.

<sup>403</sup> *Hazell*, 'Hazell Pays a Debt', originally transmitted, 23 January 1978.

were in a film studio. Reid was keen to use all four walls in rooms because it could appear more like a real room. He argued for the use of film because:

It's a philosophical question really of being actually able to hold the stuff and touch it, which I like; being able to chop and change it ad infinitum, whereas up there [the editing suite] you're dealing with space age technology and vastly expensive equipment and the actual programme itself sitting on a machine and...is worth in the region of £50,000, and you can't smoke, and...touch it....so there's a caution about videotape...<sup>404</sup>

Reid was prepared to argue that tape was better than [16mm] film because the image it created showed all the faults. For example, the light effects possible on film were not possible on video because, 'video-tape really [was] too good.'<sup>405</sup> Reid admitted that he would 'like to go for rather rotten pictures and messy degraded images and all that. But it doesn't please the technicians.'<sup>406</sup>

In *Hazell Pays a Debt* Reid had attempted to shoot more 'rotten pictures'. Hazell and his brother-in-law arrive at a south London pub. Inside, the pub is shot in a style reminiscent of 16mm film in earlier Euston productions such as *Rumour* (1970) employing the techniques of 'direct cinema'. However, there is an obvious lens flare due to a bright studio light as the camera pans across the pub to follow the characters in. Lighting glare could be interpreted as a 'mistake' that deviated from more normal or 'authentic' film codes but, in this case, it served to reveal the use of the camera when the intention was clearly to conceal the artifice of the studio. Yet, the camera strategy was to emulate the ontology of 16mm film that had been established earlier. In the episode, gone is the non-synchronous sound of the wind or

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<sup>404</sup> Alistair Reid unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado. British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p.20.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

anything so egregious; instead, there are the naturalistic sounds of the customers in the pub.

A sense of the spontaneous and immediate is conveyed by the profile shots of some of the drinkers and there is the problem of framing them as other customers move across the shot interrupting their clear view by the viewer. The same sense of immediacy is created when there is a cut from the villain in the episode sitting in the pub to Nicholas Ball standing in another corner of the pub. The effect is a dissonance from a well-lit scene to Ball standing in shadow. The implication is that the cut has been done in 'real-time' making it impossible for aperture changes to have been made to compensate for the change in lighting. However, the lighting codes that could have signified the gritty realism found in earlier 16mm shot programmes such as *Special Branch* appeared to be at odds here with the idea of the 'professional' codes associated with the television studio. As we saw earlier, Stuart Hall suggests that these codes were to make invisible the technology of the studio in order to produce 'good television'. Conversely, the resistance by Alistair Reid to studio codes of good television, in fact, ends by looking contrived and only reinforces a sense that lighting codes associated with videotaping and not 16mm are 'natural' to the studio.

On the other hand, a lighting director could radically alter the presentation of a particular episode. According to Del Randall:

...the style and punch of a particular episode is quite fantastic, how they put their own mark on it, and I think this is what happens with lighting directors, whereas we try and keep an acceptable technical standard within those sort of bounds so that...the lighting director can do various things...some directors will try to go way over the top and to hell with the technical point at all, and others will understand it and try and keep a limit, and we're there to try and keep a balance. I don't think you're ever going to end up, if you've got different lighting directors and different programme directors, with the same pattern each



time. Maybe this is a good thing, maybe it would become very boring.<sup>407</sup>

*Hazell* was planned to re-interrogate the type of adventure possible on TV and in the studio. It would mark itself as different from the action-based series but struggle to incorporate the realism made possible by 16mm film.

### **Labour Relations and Euston Films**

The importation of the American telefilm series in the late 1950s and early 1960s whetted British audience's appetites for a style of entertainment that depended on a commitment to mass entertainment and high production values. Moreover, it was the imposition of quotas on foreign material that stimulated the production of the filmed series in the UK. Lew Grade first began to finance the production of the ITC film series under the BFPA (British Film Producers' Association) agreements, after convincing the television unions that this would not affect the production of television programmes within ATV but would allow him to break into the American market and provide an additional source of employment.

The method of working at ITC and shooting on film would contrast with the situation at ABC-TV, Thames and the other ITV companies during the 1960s and 1970s in which everything and nearly everyone would be 'in-house'.<sup>408</sup> It affected

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<sup>407</sup> Del Randall, unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado. British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p.13.

<sup>408</sup> On the other hand, the Teddington site had originally been operated by a subsidiary company called Iris Productions in 1963. The ITA had not liked this arrangement because ABC-TV had to buy-in their productions. They had told ABC to either bring it within the ABC fold or dispense with Iris Productions altogether. This attitude towards 'out-sourcing' can be compared to twenty years later when Muir Sutherland was to set up Grand Central Productions. This subsidiary company belonging to Thames would make programmes for the US market. In no way would the company take work or even resources away from Thames in the United Kingdom, it was claimed. It was described as an independent company, but its directors were Bryan Cowgill, Muir Sutherland and Mike Philips. The

production at Thames because conditions for the technical and production staff were controlled by the studio-based union, ACTT (Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians), unlike staff at ITC whose employment was based on conditions under the BFTPA.<sup>409</sup> The crucial difference was that the BFTPA contracts were short-term and given to freelance film crews working in the film industry where employment had been mostly casualised. The ACTT, however, represented both members in the film industry and those who were permanently employed by the ITV companies that were themselves represented by the employer's organisation, the Independent Television Companies Association (ITCA). It had been by only using BFTPA contracts that the technical crew working at ITC had been employed for the duration of a project. The idea that its adventure shows were actually 'films' to be exported and not meant primarily for the British television market had helped to persuade the ACTT not to call for a halt to ITC's production, but the union had remained acutely suspicious of any move that might threaten the permanently employed status and livelihoods of its membership.

An assessment of film-making for television generally and Euston Films specifically depends on an understanding of the strictly demarcated and protected labour relations and production methods of the time. Euston Films was a member of the BFTPA and all contracts were offered under their terms. Therefore, a tension existed between the staff working at Euston Films and at Thames Television, employed under contracts agreed between the ITCA and the ACTT. It would be too

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ACTT union were concerned that Grand Central would sell its films in the UK which would mean less work at Thames. In this way, Thames was moving work to its subsidiaries without protest from the IBA. See British Film Institute, Thames Television Collection, IR 86 1982/3 Specific Issues. 'Film Editing Meeting', Friday, 25 June 1982 and IR 86 ACTT Specific Issues, May 1985 – March 1986. Notes of a meeting held on Thursday, 7 February 1985. Unpaginated.

<sup>409</sup> Formerly the BFPA until 1981 when the word 'television' was added. All references to the BFTPA in this chapter use the post-1981 acronym for convenience. The BFTPA was an employers' association representing producers of films for the cinema and for television.

simple to claim that a powerful ACTT union had forced the ITV companies into uncompetitive practices since their launch, which became more obvious when Euston Films began operating. Instead, what emerges was an over-riding desire to protect jobs when unemployment was high. For example, in 1979, the ACTT had about 530 television directors as members with only 200 jobs available at any one time.<sup>410</sup>

At the same time, a memo by Jeremy Isaacs, the Head of Features at Rediffusion, about the company's Film Section, can shed light on the frustration on the issue of using film felt by management during the formation of Thames Television at the end of the 1960s. The memo offers valuable insight into why the new company would no longer film 'in-house' but preferred a quasi-independent subsidiary and it is quoted almost in its entirety:

1. The new company [Thames] might naturally consider Rediffusion's film section as an unqualified asset. Potentially it is; but as at present constituted it is more of a liability. Rediffusion's success in feature and documentary programmes has been accomplished in spite of the film section, rather than because of it.
2. Rediffusion, unlike other ITV companies, has set up a film section from its inception. The staff recruited came from the feature film industry, and inherited its techniques and attitudes. For years after everyone else was shooting film for TV on 16mm, Rediffusion continued to shoot on 35mm. Although 16mm cameras were eventually purchased it is only today that the dubbing theatre is being equipped to handle 16mm...
3. Rediffusion have consistently refused to allocate particular crews to particular programmes. They have preferred to schedule film-crews on an hourly basis, switching them from current affairs, to drama, to series, to

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<sup>410</sup> British Film Institute, Thames Television Collection, IR 18 January-December 1981. Photocopied sheets including one of the *Financial Times* for Tuesday, 1 May 1979, 'Television director wins job battle'. Unpaginated.

schools, like pegs on a board. This works with studio crews, who complete individual productions. It is fatal with film camera crews, who can't see programmes through to the finish. The result: at Rediffusion film section labour relations are bad, morale poor.

4. Rediffusion has offered film technicians security of employment at basic rates of pay, thus ensuring that it retains some technicians of mediocre standard, who are unwilling to risk their talent on the freelance market. Other ITV companies (ATV, Granada) hire freelance film effort as required. This has enabled them, of recent years, to make better films, faster and cheaper than Rediffusion.

5. The new company [Thames] will need film for current affairs, documentary, actuality type programmes. It will not need film for drama or dramatic series, intending to make these entirely in the studio, or, under a different union agreement, entirely on film.

THIS MAJOR CHANGE OF REQUIREMENT MUST GOVERN FROM THE OUTSET THE SHAPE AND ORGANISATION OF THE FILM UNIT EMPLOYED [original capitals].<sup>411</sup>

By 1968, a film crew using 16mm would have consisted of four technicians, a cameraman, assistant cameraman, sound recordist and assistant recordist, plus the production staff, i.e. the director and his/her P.A. This was known as 2+2 crewing. 35mm crewing required 4+4 minimum crewing. It was disallowed to shoot on 16mm and blow it up to 35mm 'without serious aggro from ACTT (if found out of course!)'.<sup>412</sup> However, with new and lighter equipment, there was no reason why a 16mm camera could not be operated single-handed. 'The cameraman is his own focus puller with today's cameras and the new self-blipped cameras, the BL Arri or

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<sup>411</sup> Jeremy Isaacs, 'Rediffusion Film Section', 24 July 1967. British Film Institute, Thames Television Collection, IR 36, Film Department, 67-73.

<sup>412</sup> Paul Gillespie to J. O'Keefe (Controller of Staff Relations) '16mm Film', memo, 31 July 1975, British Film Institute, Thames Television Collection, IR 4. Both men were managers at Thames.

new Bolex, are designed for solo operation'.<sup>413</sup> In fact the controls on the camera were so placed as to be difficult for an assistant to use without getting in the way. New equipment would lead to further pressures to shoot not only on 16mm outside the confines of the studio, but use the latest 'hand-grab' cameras.

The mobility of the new 16mm cameras was matched by the flexibility of the BFTPA agreements. Under the ITCA agreements, at least 96 hours notice had to be given to changes in rostered working hours and staff could only be asked to work a maximum of 38 hours per week.<sup>414</sup> Ted Childs was to explain that:

...I had a strong feeling that Euston Films could only survive while we remained economically viable...So we had very flexible arrangements, we would often get a writer in at the last minute to change something or change the schedule to keep within the ten day cycle of production. We could do this, but it would be very difficult to do in a studio with the strict rules about rostering and the use of equipment across a wide range of programme areas. We were a law unto ourselves so we had a much easier time in many ways than a producer trying to make a comparable show in a BBC or ITV studio structure.<sup>415</sup>

However, by 1970, the British film industry was experiencing a deep historical shift in the nature, production and marketing of film material. Technological and aesthetic development had led to a massive increase in location filming. Large studio film production, it was believed, was drawing to an end. The sudden decline in the production of the shot-on-film TV series in 1969/70 had deepened unemployment already created by the massive withdrawal of American

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<sup>413</sup> David Graham, Labour Relations Advisor, 'Film Department', 30 May 1968, p.2. British Film Institute, Thames Television Collection, IR 36, Film Department, 67-73.

<sup>414</sup> Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made for Television: Euston Films Limited* (London: British Film Institute in association with Thames Television International, 1985), p. 26

<sup>415</sup> Ted Childs quoted in Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, 1985, p. 28.

investment in British feature films, and which the ACTT blamed for the deepening crisis of casualisation in the film industry.<sup>416</sup> By 1974, nine out of ten of the 6,000 plus membership of the ACTT's Film Production Branch were working as casual freelancers; a situation that the union felt was intolerable. The big studios at Shepperton and Pinewood were argued to be a 'dinosaur overtaken by technological change and the vogue for realism. Lightweight cameras, fast films, electronics, and the hard economics of a contracting industry have dictated the evolution of the all-location picture...'<sup>417</sup>

This was the industrial background to Euston Films starting to make films for television in the early 1970s and signalled future resistance to the 'four-waller'; a film that was not shot or based in the big film studios (Pinewood, Shepperton, Twickenham) or at Elstree, and did not require any set construction.<sup>418</sup> Unlike the ITC telefilms of the 1960s, because they were using 16mm film Euston Films was seen to be attacking the contracts of ACTT members, by only shooting on location. In 1973, a year marked in Britain by industrial strife, the ACTT leadership was preparing to halt the shooting of 'four wallers' wherever they might be.

In 1973, Howard Thomas had announced that Thames would spend £5.5 million on drama over the next two years.<sup>419</sup> Part of this package had involved the setting up of a new company called Euston Films which would turn out movies for television. Euston Films Limited was registered on 9 March 1971, but did not

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<sup>416</sup> Anon, 'Film in Television: Some of the Findings of the ACTT Forum', *Broadcast*, 31 August 1973, p. 12.

<sup>417</sup> John P. Bennett, 'Those Old Studios', *Film and Television Technician*, vol. 40, no.343, February 1974, pp. 8-9 (p. 8).

<sup>418</sup> Anon, 'Four-wallers: Policy Defined', *Film and Television Technician*, vol.40, no.345, April 1974, p. 16.

<sup>419</sup> Anon, 'A 60 Minute Movie Made on Location Every Ten Days', *Broadcast*, 13 April 1973, p. 14.

commence production until September 1972 because of discussions between Thames management and the union shops of Thames' drama department at Teddington Studios. The union sought an assurance that Euston would not mean a diminution of the work at Teddington and work that could be done at Teddington would not be done by Euston Films now based at an old school building in Colet Court, Hammersmith.

In 1973, the first year of production for Euston Films, the Executive Committee of the ACTT had decided to 'black' (avoid contact with) the production of *Special Branch* at its site at Colet Court. The decision to order Union members not to work at Colet Court had initially been as a result of unsafe and unhygienic conditions because it was not a purpose built studio, but a semi-derelict old school.<sup>420</sup> However, a General Council meeting was met by a demonstration of over a hundred members outside the ACTT's Soho Head Office, protesting against the decision to black Colet Court.<sup>421</sup> After a full discussion in which the representatives of the Euston Films Shop participated, it was decided to allow shooting of *Special Branch* to continue.

One unforeseen consequence of the confrontation between the union and the freelance members working for Euston Films was to create a greater unity between people working at Euston Films, as they felt their livelihoods, never certain because of their status as freelancers, threatened by a union leadership out of touch with its members. Unlike the anonymity of working in the studio within a large organisation, the idea of a 'family' working at Euston Films, meant, because of the opposition by

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<sup>420</sup> The conditions at Colet Court can be more than guessed at because it appears as a setting in several *Special Branch* episodes, including *Round the Clock*, originally broadcast, 11 April 1973. Pat Gilbert offers a highly romantic view of film-making at Colet Court but the lack of proper facilities was partially compensated by a 'sense of comradeship', he explains. See Pat Gilbert, *Shut It! The Inside Story of The Sweeney* (London: Aurum, 2010), p. 69.

<sup>421</sup> Anon, 'General Council Resolution on Euston Films Productions', *Film and Television Technician*, vol.39, no.340, November 1973, p. 9.

the ACTT, according to Ted Childs, that Euston Films was able to ‘...weld us all very close together. The team working with me at the time were all freelance. There was no obligation to stay around, but it did bring us very close together and I think that was one of the factors which led...to the kind of uniqueness and, within all its limitations, the quality of the product.’<sup>422</sup> Trevor Preston, a writer at Euston, echoes this sentiment when he describes the difference in attitude between the crew and technicians at Teddington and those working for Euston. At Euston Films, crew and technicians would not necessarily see what they were doing as a job, an effort rewarded purely in financial terms, and when working on a programme ‘they gave it their all’.<sup>423</sup>

Nevertheless, the persistent threat of casualisation in the film industry and the perceived threat to jobs in television meant that the ACTT at Teddington continued to make forceful representations to Thames management. According to the union, too many of the most interesting and prestigious programmes, such as *The Sweeney* (1975-78) were being done on location and on film, and there might be not enough future work at Teddington for its permanently employed staff. Jeremy Isaacs, Director of Programming at Thames, would explain:

We may gradually increase the output of Euston Films over the years without diminishing the output that comes from Teddington...Equally...they are extremely talented people and they are not to be deprived of work just because it is possible to do things on film. One of the trickiest things I have to do over the next few years is to make sure that

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<sup>422</sup> Ted Childs quoted in Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made for Television: Euston Films Limited* (London: British Film Institute in association with Thames Television International, 1985), p. 54.

<sup>423</sup> Trevor Preston, author’s interview, 15 February 2011.



however much we do on film there is still plenty of interesting work to be done at Teddington.<sup>424</sup>

On the other hand, Isaacs makes the point that it might be more interesting to say:

...look you've done that long enough in the studio, we're taking it out because we can give it more life on film, and we're going to give you something else marvellous instead... Things like *Callan* were done in the studio and were highly successful though they were done at a time when ITV was not doing chase series or investigative series on film. As soon as you do it on film you provide a whole new pace and zip. It makes it that much more difficult to do anything similar in the studio.<sup>425</sup>

The issue of labour relations was to play a major determining role in the look of Euston Films because the use of 16mm film had made it possible to challenge the 'in-house' production of British television. 'We never came into contact with anyone working in the studio. We never went into a studio, shooting on film and working in television were totally, totally different worlds,' explains Stephen Pushkin, a location manager at Euston Films.<sup>426</sup> Until the destruction of the 'closed shop' in the mid to late 1980s, the roles and function of staff remained highly demarcated and the highly structured production organisation in the television studios felt itself threatened by work practices at Euston Films. In this way, the forms and modes of two adventure series, *Special Branch* and *Hazell*, that might have shared generic and narrative similarities were, in different ways, demarcated and regulated and can be distinguished as much by their production processes as aesthetic ones.

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<sup>424</sup> Manuel Alvarado and Edward Buscombe, *Hazell* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), pp. 39-40.

<sup>425</sup> Alvarado and Buscombe, *Hazell*, p. 40.

<sup>426</sup> Stephen Pushkin, author's second interview, 24 February 2011.

## **Conclusion:**

### **The Culture of Celluloid Television**

This chapter has focused on the relationship between aesthetic innovation and technological change, citing examples of 35mm and 16mm film-making and the use of extra-diegetic and diegetic space, colour and picture quality within the British adventure series on television. This perspective has extended the contextual framework within which dramatic interventions materialised, but also raised wider questions about the relations between technology and aesthetics. The chapter has examined the impact of technology as a framework of inter-connecting influences, viewing technology as the result of economic and ideological factors that shaped the social.

From the mid 1960s to the 1970s, there was a production preference in many areas of British TV drama for shooting on film which in many ways was in opposition to working either live in the studio or on videotape – although this did not necessarily mean shooting on 35mm. By the 1970s, the desire to shoot on film was not simply an interest in improving the sharpness of the image because the alternative, an electronic image using videotape on a quadruplex recorder, was relatively primitive: the quadruplex recorder, developed by Ampex, was the first practical and commercially successful videotape format, but suffered from signal-to-noise problems, saturated colour noise, and moiré patterning, leading to a loss of picture quality. Production staff may have been concerned with the technical quality of the image, but programme makers were also interested in using film because of its other aesthetic possibilities such as the ease of editing and the use of the depth of field that film afforded to the visual presentation of the image. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, film cameras and lenses were improving and low contrast print films were being

introduced that allowed the contrast of the photographic system to match that required by the electronics used in television. From 1960 to 1981, at least 38 new or improved motion picture products had been introduced by Kodak alone.<sup>427</sup> It was new image combinations and new kinds of depictive significance encouraged by the use of 35mm film in the 1960s and 16mm in the 1970s that led to their hybrid use, as we shall see in the last two chapters.

Stuart Hall, in the 1970s, claimed that the language of cinema formed the dominant discourse in television, but Troy Kennedy Martin identified it as only a form of naturalism. But, in fact, as we have seen, technical and aesthetic considerations could sometimes interact to create a style of film-making that was more suitable for an electronic medium appropriate to a domestic rather than a theatrical audience and which could employ non-naturalistic elements signifying 'grittiness' or an epic scale. Hall has argued that the general rule is that the more serious or 'high culture' a dramatic production is, the less it will be conceived for television and the more that television will borrow forms from other media.<sup>428</sup> However, as we have seen, a camera used at an Elstree studio in the 1960s to film a relatively prestigious television series could be used to record a complex series of ideological engagements that were distinctly televisual representations of space and colour.

Moreover, the argument that the studio and the use of video constrained television's reshaping of material as far as shooting was concerned has to be balanced by the recording of 'events' on 16mm to which 'live' presentation aspired and which

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<sup>427</sup> D. J. Kimbley, 'Survival of Celluloid in the Age of Microelectronics', *Television: the Journal of the Royal Television Society*, September/October 1981, pp. 21-25 (p. 23).

<sup>428</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Television and Culture', *Sight and Sound*, vol.45, no.4, Autumn 1976, pp. 246-252.

formed some of the style on adventure series such as *Special Branch*. As heir to those production systems, 16mm film was able to reproduce the various ways of addressing the audience characteristic of its predecessor and live television.

These adaptations have created a changing technical and aesthetic use of moving image that has led to a two way process between film and the electronic image in which the televisual mode has been constantly updated. Television as a medium has often historically privileged the actors and the script and sought to weakly transform the content, but rather than viewing the relationship between film and television that Alan Parker claims was one in which television ‘boxed in’ the cinematic, the use of film in television should be seen as opening out the televisual experience when it ceased to be a relay device in the 1950s and 1960s. It was in the creation of new dramatic forms by production staff from the ‘old world’ of the film movie into the ‘new world’ of film on television that a trajectory can be traced from the shooting of the telefilm to *Special Branch*.

At the same time, this chapter acknowledges that during the 1960s and 1970s, even within the field of union organisation there were different employment contracts for film and studio production for television. ‘Creative’ in television was a divisive term and the cultural baggage attached to shooting either on film or electronically ran the risk of ghettoising workers. The shooting of ‘four wallers’ on 16mm whose primary function was originally not the export market would mark the beginning of the end of the complete in-house factory of the television duopoly and an older definition of creativity in British television.

## 4. ITC and ABC-TV: the 1960s Adventure Series

### Introduction:

This chapter attempts to further situate the television programmes that have been discussed, so far, within their contexts of production. Unlike the previous chapter, it is less interested in the *process* of production and more in the broader discourses in which the processes took part. It is mainly concerned with how each show constructed expectations that were negotiated within the imperatives of the British public service ethic and the commodified values of entertainment, as well as the appeal to a domestic and an international audience. The following case studies explore those questions, raised in the introduction of the thesis, within a specific period of television history through a production and textual analysis of three key shows. Each of these shows can be understood as an example of the action-adventure series because they share the same recurring use of the spy: there is a narrative based on action and pursuit, requiring physical courage whose function is to uncover a conspiracy that will eventually defeat the villain.

However, this chapter makes clear that this categorisation of the 1960s adventure series as only belonging to the tradition of the ‘sensational’ thriller ignores the variegated nature of these shows in Britain and the problem of classifying television form because of its lack of a unified aesthetic. The action-adventure series of the 1960s depended on a recurring set of characters which were repeated week after week with only a new mystery to be solved (some of which were suspiciously similar to others). Yet, the analysis of individual programmes can work against the notion of popular culture as only being homogeneous and repetitive. The following case studies do not ignore the diachronic links to earlier shows and older themes and ideas,

but also find, using close historical analysis, how each show contained elements of uniqueness and convention.

Thus far, this thesis has identified and explored recurring discourses, for example, how notions of a consumer-led modernity in the 1960s added to an understanding of television history, including the development of aesthetics of celluloid television within the action-adventure series. It is specific historical instances which can begin to re-theorise dominant paradigms and the creation of proximate worlds between, to give one example, a consumer-led modernity and the counter-culture of the 1960s, which examines some of the complex ways that style on film has functioned within the adventure television series.

### **The Appeal to Youth**

By the end of the 1950s, ITC would shift its focus from the swashbuckling adventure to develop a more modern adventure show that incorporated the generic conventions familiar from the adventure thriller. Ralph Smart would be responsible for the original concept of *The Invisible Man* (1958-59) which involved a scientist, Peter Brady, patriotically offering his services to British intelligence, and thence dedicating himself to thwarting criminals and spies threatening Britain. The eponymous character was loosely based on the fantasy by H.G. Wells, which would be aimed at younger viewers. Prefiguring *Danger Man*, Brady is dispatched to a series of mythical countries and foils several insidious plots involving gun-running and attempted revolutions. For example, in the final episode, *The Big Plot*<sup>429</sup>, there is a

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<sup>429</sup> *The Invisible Man*, 'The Big Plot', originally transmitted, 5 July 1959.

terrorist plot to smuggle uranium into all the capitals of the West to trigger a nuclear war. Co-written by Brian Clemens, the episode often ‘reads like Ian Fleming meets The Avengers’.<sup>430</sup> The series was attacked for being anti-Communist and Frank Allaun, MP, called for it to be banned, because it ‘created enmity towards other nations.’<sup>431</sup> However, despite these claims, *The Invisible Man* was, like its immediate swashbuckling predecessors, aimed at families with children.<sup>432</sup> Yet the same desire to preserve seriousness mixed with popularity was repeated in the ‘modern’ adventure shows as much as it had appeared in the swashbucklers with their emphasis on ‘quality’. *The Invisible Man* sought to be a modern adventure, but soon other shows included notions of modernity in directions scarcely imagined by the earlier shows.

In 1958, after the success of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *The Invisible Man* was a show by ITC that became the first in a sequence to be set in a recognisable present with a British intelligence agent at its centre. Next was a series, *Interpol Calling* (1959), with an agent working for the international police network. An obvious follow-up would be an agent for NATO and in 1960, Ralph Smart, an ex-motion film director, and now a producer working for Lew Grade, devised the character Patrick McGoohan would play in the *Danger Man* series – John Drake.

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<sup>430</sup> Robert Sellers, *Cult TV: the Golden Age of ITC* (London: Plexus, 2006), p. 35.

<sup>431</sup> Hilary Kingsley and Geoff Tibballs, *Box of Delights: the Golden Years of Television* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 46.

<sup>432</sup> There was an article in *TV Times* that sought to demonstrate how the Invisible Man had become a character that was pleasing children. See Anon, ‘The Invisible Man Visits the Tower’, *TV Times*, 5-11 October 1958, pp. 10-11. In the article, the Invisible Man has become an avuncular figure, visiting the Tower of London, and pleasing small children. One of the curious things about the show was that it was intended to be a comedy adventure, but became more of a political thriller later. *The Invisible Man* was scheduled from 9.35 to 10.05 pm on a Sunday. The implication is that unlike, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the show became, after its initial conception, one for older children and adults. It also demonstrates the contingent nature of much television, which is subject to compromise and negotiation without necessarily following a pre-determined plan. See Sellers, *Cult TV*, p. 37.

Smart had heard that Grade was looking for film technicians in the 1950s and had worked on *Robin Hood*, *The Buccaneers* and *The Invisible Man* before being asked to suggest a new subject. After the success of *The Invisible Man*, preparations for a new series called *James Bond* were made:

At the time Ian Fleming was coming down to the studios [Elstree] and talking to Ralph Smart, and they'd started work on the series. And then at some juncture there was a falling out...and instead of it appearing as *James Bond*, it appeared as *Danger Man*, with John Drake as opposed to James.<sup>433</sup>

From the 1960s the adventure genre was identified increasingly with a younger audience but not necessarily a juvenile one. In a nationwide furore, the *Radio Times* had encouraged viewers to become accredited, card-carrying members of U.N.C.L.E., helping them to indulge in the fantasy of belonging to a spy organisation. By September 1965, membership had approached the 100,000 mark.<sup>434</sup> However, in Britain, these shows were themselves sites of the tension between different aesthetics – fantasy and realism – which was part of a more general cultural phenomenon during the 1960s that British television action-adventure sought to represent and use to its own ends.

The demographic significance of the post-war baby boom meant youth culture and imagery had become increasingly important by the 1960s. However, it should be recognised that the appeal to youth was always expected to reach further into the rest of the population and extend beyond the youth market proper. The language of youth could be applied in marketing television to all varieties of people because youth was

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<sup>433</sup> Roger Marshall quoted in Matthew Morgen Stern, 'The Marshall Chronicles', *Primetime: the Television Magazine*, no.13, Winter 1987-88, pp. 2-7 (p. 2).

<sup>434</sup> Anon, Untitled, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 October 1965, p. 9.



an attractive consuming attitude and not simply an age. For example, in spite of Patrick McGoochan's age in *The Prisoner* (he was 40) he was the star of a show that was aimed at a 'with-it' audience, which valorised the attitudes of the rebellious counter-culture associated with youth. The privileging of the 'with-it' or 'hip over square' marked more generally a development of a new ideology of consumption that television was part of.

At the same time, the counter-culture would allow consumers to indulge other transitory whims; there would be an irreverence for moral Puritanism, and contempt for established social rules that could be represented materially in a show like *The Avengers* as a transition from the slowed-down, buttoned-up (and often colonial) conformity of their ancestors (see the analysis of the episode *The Gravediggers* on pp.225-227). In the counter-culture, a programme such as *The Avengers* could also, because of its emphasis on pastiche and irony, become a model for consumer subjectivity, be intelligent, and at war with the conformist past at the same time. One of the main symbols on television of the new antinomian consumerism available during the 1960s was the adventurer spy and the somewhat jaded jet-setter as well as the professional technician in *Danger Man*. However, it was McGoochan who was able to represent the antinomy present in the Bond films and the spy thriller generally as something that was in 'bad taste' and, in a particular sense, non-British, to distinguish the Bond adventure film at the cinema from its British version on television.

In a profile of Patrick McGoochan for the first series of *Danger Man* in *TV Times*, it was made clear that John Drake would be 'brawl[ing] like a gentleman'.<sup>435</sup> The fact that the role of John Drake was the 1960s equivalent of a knight adventurer can be mostly attributed to the show's producer, Ralph Smart, who had worked as a writer and director on *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot*. Drake was to be representative of an older type of heroic figure than the *Boy's Own* adventure heroes dreamt up by John Buchan. 'For as McGoochan wends his knightly way across the world, seeking out villainy, his fists will be as virtuous as his cause', explained the *TV Times*.<sup>436</sup> Here we have a latter-day knight errant, brave and strong, who treats women with chivalry and courtesy. The link was made to the earlier swashbuckling adventure of the late 1950s and the chivalrous John Drake would have created a clear line of continuity for the audience between the earlier sorts of shows for which they had already shown their approval and its replacement in *Danger Man*. Patrick McGoochan was to explain that his character was 'not a thick-ear specialist, a puppet muscle man...I want Drake to be in the heroic mould, like the classic Western hero, which means he has to be a good man'.<sup>437</sup> Any 'rough stuff' would be treated in the *Boy's Own* adventure tradition already visible in the gentlemanly *Robin Hood* without any sadism or brute violence.

The inclusion of actresses such as Beverly Garland (an American)<sup>438</sup> and Europeans such as Monique Ahrens<sup>439</sup> gave the show an international flavour to help brand it for sale to the American networks. Patrick McGoochan had been chosen after

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<sup>435</sup> John K. Newnham, 'Danger Man', *TV Times*, 11-17 September 1960, pp. 8-9 (p. 8).

<sup>436</sup> Newnham, 'Danger Man', p.8.

<sup>437</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV*, p.43.

<sup>438</sup> Appeared in *Danger Man*, 'Bury the Dead', originally transmitted, 19 March 1961.

<sup>439</sup> Appeared in *Danger Man*, 'The Key', originally transmitted, 20 November 1960.

Smart had seen him in a television production of *The Big Knife* on *Armchair Theatre*.<sup>440</sup> Later Lew Grade attributed much of the series' success to McGoohan, and also to the fact that, 'we were determined to make it a fast-moving series, because it doesn't matter what you say about American action adventure series they do have pace and gloss, and we had that in *Danger Man*.'<sup>441</sup> Each sequence contributed directly to the story, but there was little opportunity for character development. Yet the limitations of *Danger Man*, and the filmed series more generally, meant that it had other pleasures to offer.

The first run of *Danger Man* (1960-62) was too early to fully capitalise on the 1960s fascination with spies and secret agents. Ian Fleming had published the first James Bond book in 1953 and the first Bond film, *Dr No*, was to premiere in 1962, two years after *Danger Man* began. However, Drake's character appeared tailored to what have been claimed to be the significant trends of the early 1960s. He was classless and sophisticated so that he accurately reflected the early 1960s goal of affluence and was very much a part of the new consumer society. He travelled widely when many of his audience were just beginning to become foreign tourists, and so he was clearly a fantasy figure for many of his viewers, but not too much of a fantastic figure that the many lands he visited were not already familiar from travelogues on television.

Nevertheless, it was not until the hour-long 1964 second series that Drake began to rely on elaborate Bondian gadgetry. The appeal to the youthful zeitgeist of

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<sup>440</sup> *Armchair Theatre*, 'The Big Knife', originally transmitted, 30 December 1958.

<sup>441</sup> John Wyver, 'Danger Man: Thirty Minute Hero', *Primetime: the Television Magazine*, no.9, 1984, pp. 2-4 (p. 3).

the 1960s allowed for the expansion of the thematic and stylistic range of the genre. The gadget foreshadowed a future in which, since the invention of the transistor in the early 1950s, advanced technologies were to be consumer products on a mass market. Tie-pins doubled as cameras, cherries contained miniature microphones and an electric razor could serve as a tape-recorder and transmitter. The ingenuity of the writers in thinking up more gadgets can be gauged from their description by Brian Clemens in *Time to Kill*:<sup>442</sup>

Having parked his car in the forest clearing, Drake throws open its doors and lays a blanket on the ground. Reaching beneath the driving seat, he produces two innocent-looking French loaves. He breaks them apart and removes a small metal box. From this he takes out seven rifle bullets. The second loaf contains a rifle trigger mechanism. Reaching behind the car's steering column, he removes a thermos flask which, once its stopper has been removed, reveals a silencer. A tug beneath the dashboard and the undercover man holds an ammo-magazine. Placing this next to a rifle butt (secreted in a false door panel), Drake adds further pieces to the puzzle: a telescopic rifle sight, a rifle barrel (when you're a secret agent, a car's bonnet holds several secrets) until, neatly slotted together, Drake holds a death-wielding device.<sup>443</sup>

In *Danger Man* the gadget was deployed without brute force, but coolly, in the hands of a professional individual, and more closely to the values that became assigned to representations of consumer technology within the advertising media now visible on television. The gadget was designed for a precise, functional use that played an important role in the accomplishment of the mission.

At the same time, the spy was positioned as someone who refused to allow emotion to disrupt the clear-sightedness of his gaze on the modern world:

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<sup>442</sup> *Danger Man*, 'Time to Kill', originally transmitted 18 September 1960.

<sup>443</sup> Brian Clemens quoted in Dave Rogers, *The Prisoner and Danger Man* (London: Boxtree, 1989), p. 12.

...he is adept at sorting out local problems throughout the world. A quick plane or train journey, two or three days work, and order is restored. Is it then too much to see him as a fulfilment of Britain's waning status as a world power? After Suez in 1956 the country's Imperial ambitions (initiated under another Drake three centuries earlier) were severely dented; no longer could we send a gunboat to sort out distant troubles. Instead we had John Drake who could solve most jobs of international importance inside half an hour.<sup>444</sup>

The appeal to a 'young' audience, embodying counter-culture values such as the contempt for past norms, complicates Umberto Eco's view of mass-entertainment books and films as both having culturally fixed codes and an ability to be organised as a 'narrating machine' or a kind of sophisticated game, and therefore subject to a Structuralist analysis.<sup>445</sup> Instead, it offers the possibility that a TV programme can be 'culturally active' and, although it possess qualities and narrative codes similar to Eco's narrating machine, these codes within the British action-adventure were used to differentiate such shows from their more formulaic American counterparts.<sup>446</sup>

David Buxton interprets the history of the action genre in terms of three thematic strands – the human nature series, the pop series and the police series.<sup>447</sup> For Buxton, the human nature series was one that could reveal the psychology of the characters. According to him, attempts were made in the 1950s US anthology drama series to explore 'psychological, rather than physical, confrontation...human emotion

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<sup>444</sup> John Wyver, 'Danger Man: Thirty Minute Hero', p. 4.

<sup>445</sup> See chapter 1, pp. 73-74.

<sup>446</sup> For a thorough analysis of the narrative codes within *The Prisoner* that regulated his relationship to The Village, see Chris Gregory, *Be Seeing You...Decoding the Prisoner* (Luton: University of Luton, 1997)

<sup>447</sup> David Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990)

and human nature, which could be graphically represented in close-ups.<sup>448</sup> However, by the second series of *Danger Man*, Buxton argues that an earlier moral seriousness on television was constantly in tension with a newer irony; the signs of 1960s consumption and technology straining against older values of duty.<sup>449</sup>

In *Parallel Lines Sometimes Meet*<sup>450</sup>, the last episode of the second series, Drake's presence in the West Indies, rather than reinforcing his Britishness, is a chance for him to show off his cosmopolitanism and his ease in an 'exotic' culture. When Vernon Brooks and his wife, both employed on atomic weapons research, are hijacked, Drake becomes involved in a complicated mission to discover their whereabouts. Drake spends the episode signifying the modern and the progressive as he battles against an anarchist named Victor N'Dias, a member of an African organisation anxious to have nuclear power. He enjoys the hospitality of a hotel in which he is bemused by stories of zombies (the island of Tahitia is clearly a fictional representation of Haiti). Against this world of primitive superstition, which is admittedly consciously parodied by the programme and reflects changing attitudes about the benighted and ignorant native, he is able to demonstrate his superiority by using a speeded-up tape recorder, another piece of advanced technology, to receive information from London that confounds the local authorities who are left none the wiser about his mission to their island.

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<sup>448</sup> Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, p.22. Buxton refers to 13 'playhouse' programmes on American television by 1955.

<sup>449</sup> Buxton never quite says whether he is referring to US or UK television at this stage which is problematic as he is dealing with a British show. Nevertheless, although a generalisation, it is possible to say that the trends he identifies were present in both the US and UK. See David Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, pp. 76-93 (p. 92).

<sup>450</sup> *Danger Man*, 'Parallel Lines Sometimes Meet', originally transmitted, 16 March 1965.

However, Buxton's argument that in *Danger Man* there was a condensation of the 'pop' alliance between the worlds of fashion and advance technology (its gadgetry) is more problematic. The one hour episodes of *Danger Man*, beginning with the 1964 second series, would include the credit: 'Clothes created by members of the Fashion House Group of London'. Nevertheless, Pop Art, although acknowledged by the show, was very much in the background. Equally, the initial series of *The Avengers* in 1961 continued to use a realistic style and, although style was becoming more distinctive in *The Avengers* by the third series, both shows continued in a long line of small screen super sleuths, which remained more rooted in realism. Moreover, the attempt to identify either show with 'pop' is a difficult one because its influence can only really be discerned from about 1965-66 in *The Avengers* and was marginal until the made-in-colour fifth series of 1967. As we will see with *The Avengers*, the writer and the producer were the key players to any fictional British television series, and Ralph Smart, like Julian Wintle on *The Avengers*, was a producer unlikely to have had a personal interest in the emerging 'pop' form of television more readily identifiable by the fifth series of *The Avengers*. The critical and intellectual climate in Britain continued to privilege realism in television. Even in a series like *The Avengers*, the comedic pastiche of older forms and narrative conceits, sometimes claimed to be a type of proto post-modernism, can be read as more a commentary on a firmly entrenched tradition of realism that existed pervasively on television. It was because of realism's dominance that it was possible slowly, but only gradually, to subvert its conventions during the mid to late 1960s.

To illustrate this gradual process, it was on *Danger Man* that McGoochan first became interested in the technicalities of film production. He went on to direct some of the episodes, including *The Vacation*<sup>451</sup> and, later, *The Ubiquitous Mr Lovegrove* which had an influence on the film style of *The Prisoner* says Sidney Cole, an editor and second unit director on *Danger Man*.<sup>452</sup> *The Ubiquitous Mr Lovegrove* was stylistically quite different from the realism of most of the *Danger Man* episodes. Written by David Stone, who in the same year (1965) was to pen a *Wednesday Play*<sup>453</sup>, the episode has John Drake involved in a car accident. After a devastating wreck, the camera slowly zooms in on the clock on the dashboard which has stopped at 12 o' clock. The story takes the form of a dream, but it is not immediately apparent that we are watching Drake's unconscious mind, although the clocks all tell the time at 12 and, it becomes evident, that there are two John Drakes. Slowly, the story becomes more manic and the style uses a system of dissolves from one shot to the next to suggest a disruption of the time/space unities of realism. However, the dominant style retains a familiar realism, and any stylisation is justified because it is illustrative of an interior state. Nevertheless, the episode is noteworthy because it reflected McGoochan's own interest in developing a more sophisticated style for a popular television series and an attempt to have the show transcend the repeatable and familiar conventions of the adventure series. The surrealism of John Drake fighting another identical John Drake prefigured McGoochan's desire to explore psychological

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<sup>451</sup> *Danger Man*, 'The Vacation', originally transmitted, 29 January 1961.

<sup>452</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV*, p. 49. *Danger Man*, 'The Ubiquitous Mr Lovegrove' was originally transmitted, 16 February 1965.

<sup>453</sup> *The Wednesday Play*, 'The Seven O' Clock Crunch', originally transmitted, 30 June 1965 and directed by Toby Robertson.



states that he was able to do in *The Prisoner* and demonstrates a sensibility that could make strange the regularity of television.

In these ways, film was not simply used to represent a condensation between exotic places, fashion and electronic technology, as suggested by Buxton. Instead, in Britain, there was a further tension between the values of commodification and the values of public broadcasting. What Buxton calls ‘moral seriousness’ can be thought of as the service ethic that asked for a narrative density seeking to engage an audience of citizens rather than consumers. Although much more marginal in *Danger Man*, this contradiction was most apparent in its successor show, *The Prisoner*, aimed at representing the main protagonist’s resistance to the authority of the information society of the 1960s. The gadgets were no longer consumer items, but visible forms of a repressive state apparatus. However, the Althusserian ideological approach to the analysis of the relation of film and society – emphasising the medium’s role in the reproduction of social relations – reached the limits of theoretical articulation of this problem.<sup>454</sup> Nowhere did Althusser provide a place for the audience’s differential positions and readings according to their social position or practice. The adventure series on television, once it was shot on film, was not limited to a single discourse of 1960s consumerism, but continued to grow in narrative and stylistic sophistication

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<sup>454</sup> Louis Althusser has written how ideology is not an unchanging set of ideas imposed upon the subordinate by the dominant classes. Instead it is a process that is constantly reproduced and reconstituted in practice. At the centre of this theory is the notion of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). These are social institutions such as the family, language and, crucially, the media, which produce in people tendencies to behave and act in socially acceptable ways (as opposed to the repressive state apparatuses of the police force and the law), which coerce people into behaving according to social norms. See Louis Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127-86.

that was gradual and able to tackle other discourses that could be relied on to separate out individual television texts.

The success of *Danger Man* on the American network, CBS, meant that the British show was 'on target' with American tastes and its 'youth' audience as much as in Britain.<sup>455</sup> Meanwhile, *Variety* reporter Roger Watkins noted in a November article that *Secret Agent*<sup>456</sup> had 'firmly nailed a once-predominant notion that British production values are too sluggish for the US "big-league" broadcasters'.<sup>457</sup> For Lew Grade, managing director of ATV, 'It shows that our production standards in terms of quality and technical know-how, are equal to the best Hollywood can produce.'<sup>458</sup> However, Robert Norris, a director of ABC Television, declared that Britain had been fortunate because it had benefited from the Bond phenomenon, but 'the world is changing, tastes are changing, and in some ways British entertainment today seems to embody that happy mixture of, on the one hand, tradition and sophistication and, on the other, modern youthful aggression'.<sup>459</sup>

The success that British TV enjoyed in America should not be over-estimated, and remained modest. The idea of a 'British invasion' has to be continually measured. Norris was conscious that there was a risk of reading too much into the success of British shows stateside and struck a more cautious tone:

The secret agent trend...is surely coming to an end...The Americans may already be setting a new trend with

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<sup>455</sup> Les Brown, 'Britain Makes It on US TV – O'Seas Influence Makes Its Mark', *Variety*, 30 June 1965, p. 1.

<sup>456</sup> *Danger Man* was called *Secret Agent* in the US.

<sup>457</sup> Roger Watkins, 'British Prepare US Invasion – Majors, Indies Pitching Shows', *Variety*, 3 November 1965, p. 25.

<sup>458</sup> Anon, 'Danger Man Named for Hollywood', *Television Mail*, 4 March 1966, p. 6.

<sup>459</sup> Robert Norris, 'There's No Turning Back', *Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts*, no.23, Spring 1966, pp.14-16 (p. 15).

*Batman*, a trend which we may find more difficult to do better or even as well. We have not yet found a way of breaking into the comedy market over there...the shows that have been sold in the States have so far only shown that they are perhaps better than the unsuccessful American shows (hence their use as replacements), and not yet that they can compete with America's best, at least in the US.<sup>460</sup>

Audiences were not substantial enough to keep *Danger Man* in production after the summer of 1966, although it has been claimed that Patrick McGoochan no longer wished to continue the series.<sup>461</sup> Jeffrey Miller argues that the loss of *Danger Man* was because it was no longer able to distinguish itself from the number of American spy shows that had begun to proliferate after the success of *Danger Man*. It had remained different compared to NBC's *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and *Get Smart*, a spoof spy show, but it no longer provided a British cachet according to Les Brown:

With Beatlemania still in vogue, with James Bond the oversized hero of adolescent America, why haven't the British made it on American network TV?...like Japanese industrial producers, US telefilm series [producers] make marvellous copycats. In short, the British have a tough time to protect what may be their very own.<sup>462</sup>

*Danger Man* had been successfully copied because it had not been too difficult to copy, concludes Miller, 'from the American Bonds'.<sup>463</sup> This may have been already in McGoochan's mind with the knowledge that the show would soon be cancelled when he was approached by George Markstein, the show's script editor for the final two episodes, to use a new idea of his which was to germinate into *The Prisoner*.

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<sup>460</sup> Norris, 'There's No Turning Back', p.15.

<sup>461</sup> Dave Rogers, *The Prisoner and Danger Man* (London: Boxtree, 1989), p.130.

<sup>462</sup> Les Brown, 'All TV Nets Give Mother England the Brush in Fall Season Shows', *Variety*, 23 February 1966, p. 35.

<sup>463</sup> Jeffrey Miller, *Something Completely Different: British Television and American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), p. 42.

However, an insistence on its British origins, and all that entailed, helps to explain *Danger Man*'s longevity compared to many of the ITC shows that often employed an American star, for example, Richard Bradford in *Man in a Suitcase* (1967), Stuart Damon as the lead in *The Champions* and, later, Robert Vaughn and Tony Curtis in *The Protectors* and *The Persuaders* respectively.

The export of British programmes to the US indicated the perils of over-commercialisation, but as we have seen, it was possible to experiment with form by adopting a more authorial position in episodes of *Danger Man* that explored psychological states. In this way, a dominant aesthetic of realism could be subverted that offered other possible discourses that relied on a more fantastic style. The inclusion of these fantastic elements was later to form newer discourses that adopted the tropes of the 'youth culture' of the 1960s. These included a sense of rapid change and the obsolescence, not only of older types of technology that were being replaced by consumer gadgets, but of social attitudes towards the new consumerism.

### ***The Avengers: Realism and Modernity (1964-65)***

The focus on far-fetched stories without psychological depth which gradually appeared in *The Avengers* was noticeable because of the theme of 'speed': Honor Blackman would race on a Royal Enfield motorbike. Clothes became 'as fast and slick as a jet plane'<sup>464</sup> and Emma Peel's wardrobe became notable for its Pop Art designs. In *The Town of No Return*<sup>465</sup> Diana Rigg debuts as Emma Peel and wears a

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<sup>464</sup> Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, p. 98.

<sup>465</sup> *The Avengers*, 'The Town of No Return', originally transmitted, 2 October 1965.

target motif beret to symbolise ‘the op-art space age’.<sup>466</sup> Rigg’s 1965 persona was of a modern, sophisticated, and young heroine, but her attraction lay less in her character and more in her symbolising modern Britain to a prime-time audience on both sides of the Atlantic. She represented a construction of national identity based on modernity. This became clear, as we have seen in chapter one, with the publicity material for series four.<sup>467</sup>

Although filming *The Avengers* in 1964-65 marks a transformative event, it would be wrong to say that character and realism was dispensed with in favour of style when the series went to film, and became an international commodity. As well as the construction of spectatorial spaces on film, narrative and character continued to be significant. Visual style, in many ways, remained an unobtrusive aesthetic. The notion within British television of the primacy of the script remained the key concern of the main production team. Julian Wintle, the producer of *The Avengers* when it went to film, had, for instance, strong views about exterior filming for its own sake and the frequent use of music in television.<sup>468</sup> He had been chosen to produce the fourth *Avengers* series because Howard Thomas, the Managing Director of ABC-TV, ‘had been impressed by his...reputation for turning out good films on a commercial basis’.<sup>469</sup> But for Wintle, ‘The best television is the dramatic confrontation between

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<sup>466</sup> Anne Francis, *Julian Wintle: a Memoir* (London: Dukeswood, 1985), p. 85.

<sup>467</sup> Marie Donaldson, ‘A History of *The Avengers*: With a Guide to the Characters of John Steed and Emma Peel’, undated but prepared for the fourth season in the autumn of 1965. (Various cuttings on microfiche at the British Film Institute).

<sup>468</sup> Wintle had been a former film editor turned producer in the 1950s who had co-founded Independent Artists in 1958 and whose credits included social realist films such as *Tiger Bay* (1959) and *This Sporting Life* (1963).

<sup>469</sup> Anne Francis quoted in James Chapman, *Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p.74.

people'.<sup>470</sup> Here was the continued privileging of the integrity of the script; the style of the show would advance the narrative, but not become an active system by upstaging the script.

A claim has been made that Harry Pottle, the designer for the fourth series of *The Avengers*, 'adopted a fluid, heterogeneous idiom – or, rather, carefully orchestrated idiomatic variety [of production design]'.<sup>471</sup> But this serves to reveal some of the tensions in the style of the show. Wintle made it clear that he preferred dramatic coding never to override the characters. 'We must learn to distinguish between filming on location in order to add some variety to the background and using an exciting background to enhance the dramatic value of the story', he explained.<sup>472</sup> Wintle's dislike of additional dramatic codes was further underlined by his discussion of music for television drama. In *The Human Jungle* (1963-64), a psychological drama, starring Herbert Lom, which he had produced and had been shot on film, he felt that in a dramatic scene between Lom and Flora Robson 'the music seemed to crush the inherent drama of the scene between the two actors'.<sup>473</sup> For Wintle, a programme's style remained an adjunct to its story-telling value, which was primarily script-based.

Wintle's ambition for *The Avengers* in 1964, therefore, appears to be restrained and a continuation of the dramatic codes associated with US shows such as *Doctor Kildare* (1961-66) and *The Defenders* (1961-65), which he had praised and

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<sup>470</sup> Julian Wintle quoted in Tony Gruner, 'Danger and Opportunity Face *The Avengers*', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 December 1964, p. 18.

<sup>471</sup> Piers D. Britton and Simon J. Barker, *Reading between Designs* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), p. 67.

<sup>472</sup> Julian Wintle quoted in Tony Gruner, 'Danger and Opportunity Face *The Avengers*', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 December 1964, p. 18.

<sup>473</sup> Gruner, 'Danger and Opportunity Face *The Avengers*', p. 18.

which had influenced his own show, *The Human Jungle*.<sup>474</sup> *The Human Jungle* had been a great success at home and internationally, and the last thirteen episodes had been shot on film at Associated British Elstree Studios by Independent Artists, the small production company set up by Wintle.<sup>475</sup> The series had used considerable location work, varying from hospitals to race-tracks and a boxing ring, and many of the directors who were to work on the fourth series of the filmed *Avengers*, including Roy Baker and Charles Crichton, had worked on *The Human Jungle*. In this way, Wintle was interested in repeating a successful formula for a television series in *The Avengers*. It would remain a comedy thriller and possess some visual stylisation - its kinkiness - but continue to retain generic boundaries and a realistic style that would mark it in many similar ways to *The Saint* and British adventure telefilms that combined witty dialogue with action.

Any claim that the image was influenced by Pop Art in the filming of the fourth series of *The Avengers* overlooks the gradual, continuous development of style in the show. There is a possibility that Wintle was not interested in the programme's style, besides an obvious naturalism and dramatic coding, to have given it much attention and it was this that provided the opportunity for others to use style and visual coding in ways that had not been planned. This may seem to be an unjustified claim because much of the fan-written hagiography of *The Avengers* appears predicated on the notion that it was more stylish than other television shows, and *a priori* this was a conscious strategy. But Anne Francis, Wintle's wife explains that:

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> The show sold to United Artists Television in America. See Anne Francis, *Julian Wintle: a Memoir* (London: Dukeswood, 1985), p. 78.

...to break into the American market ...[*The Avengers*] should, like *The Human Jungle* be essentially English to avoid competition. The formula was to set stories against a tongue-in-cheek tourist presentation, stately homes, olde inns, and modern industry. Where the previous scripts had been virtually standard thriller adventures, the new series was to become more science fiction orientated...bio-chemical plants, steel robots, and brain-washing, would also be featured...as a counterpoint to the escapades of the two dedicated Secret Agents...<sup>476</sup>

Wintle's relationship to the formula of the series was primarily through his script editor, Brian Clemens, chosen because of his success in the US, and his importance was signified by his role as associate producer on the series.<sup>477</sup> The fact that Clemens was a producer, albeit an associate one, if common in US television was unusual inside British TV and underlines the importance of his role.

The script editor of the equally popular adventure series *The Saint* was Harry Junkin. An experienced US scriptwriter, Junkin never became a producer of the show. However, he regarded the writer to be vital to its success, and he argued 'By and large, the British writer has a lot to learn when it comes to scripting for a film series. He does not seem to realise that it is so different from a live or taped series...we are still suffering from a shortage of good professional film TV [telefilm] writers.'<sup>478</sup> The script, the acting, and direction were to remain the priorities of the new telefilm shows produced in Britain during the early to mid 1960s. Later, in response to an overseas student engaged on a thesis, Wintle would explain that 'The early *Avengers* [series 4] and to my mind the best of the series - came as the result of

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<sup>476</sup> Francis, *Julian Wintle*, pp.84-5.

<sup>477</sup> Clemens had previously written for the show and had won the 1963 Edgar Allan Poe Award for tele-thriller writing in the US. See Francis, *Julian Wintle*, p. 84.

<sup>478</sup> Tony Gruner, 'Baker and Berman's Saint Goes Marching On-And On', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 August 1964, p. 15.



very close team work. Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg a tower of strength throughout. Brian Clemens's contribution on scripts...'<sup>479</sup> However, this did not mean that the new filmed shows were handled as they had been in the studio during the era of live television. The method of production on film was different.

Any celebration of *The Avengers* as only an essay in style often cites the fact that after the fifth (1967) series 'Clemens and [Albert] Fennell, initially out of favour with ABC-TV who thought the series was becoming too far-fetched, were reappointed as producers when the first episodes of the new [sixth] season were thought not to be up to scratch'.<sup>480</sup> But, in fact, Robert Norris, who had become the Managing Director of Associated British Pathé, had believed that a fickle television audience had changed its tastes and would be more responsive to a new approach in storylines. The way-out stories would be replaced by a more *realistic* type of tale with an emphasis on tension and excitement in place of light-hearted plotting, he explained.<sup>481</sup> There had already been criticism of Clemens' scripts from other executives associated with *The Avengers*.<sup>482</sup> The proposed changes to the storylines as late as 1967 demonstrate that Robert Norris together with Howard Thomas, the Managing Director of ABC-TV, were oblivious to the idea that the show had found success because of the preponderance of its visual style. Instead, Norris and Thomas believed that the qualities that 'ha[d] made the old *Avengers* series successful when produced on tape

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<sup>479</sup> Wintle quoted in Francis, *Julian Wintle*, p. 86.

<sup>480</sup> Chapman, *Saints and Avengers*, p. 88.

<sup>481</sup> Tony Gruner, 'ABC Takes Another Look at *Avengers*', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 July 1967, p.17.

<sup>482</sup> Brian Tesler, Director of Programmes at ABC-TV, referred to Clemens' formula for *The Avengers* as 'The Conception'. The implication that it was sacrosanct was to cause much of the tension between Clemens and the executives at ABC, which probably led to his temporary removal from the programme. See Dave Rogers, *The Ultimate Avengers* (London: Boxtree, 1995), p. 163.

at Teddington can usefully be brought up to date in the new series of one hour colour films...'<sup>483</sup>

However, Clemens was not, at least wholly, responsible for the 'unique' writing style of *The Avengers*. Clemens was what can be best described as a wordsmith, rather than a writer, a man more used to writing for the commercial market than writing for the single play with its values of public service. He had learnt his 'craft' from the Danzinger Brothers, and he stuck to a formula already described by John Bryce, the show's executive producer, but with sufficient modifications to keep the audience watching.<sup>484</sup> Monty Berman, the executive producer of *The Saint*, made it clear what the direction and the writing should be like for the 'new' film television of the early 1960s and his words appear apposite to a deeper appreciation of *The Avengers* during the fourth series when the show went onto film. 'In TV filming every shot must be clear. Nothing must be subtle or rushed. Unlike the cinema, you have not a captive audience. The viewers watching the show have to be held by the compulsion of the story and the acting.'<sup>485</sup> Berman continues to elucidate the direction in film television:

A director must learn to tell his story dramatically in close-up most of the time, because this is the most important aspect of television. The close-up will hold most viewers' attention providing the actor on the screen is saying something important; the long shot is correspondingly of little value in TV. Some directors are inclined to forget this fact, but we have had to learn it the hard way.<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Gruner, 'ABC Takes Another Look at *Avengers*', p. 17.

<sup>484</sup> See chapter 2, p.108.

<sup>485</sup> Gruner, 'Baker and Berman's *Saint* Goes Marching On-And On', p. 15.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Although, the techniques appear similar to those used in the electronic studio, he makes it clear that the producer's job was difficult because the techniques of scripting and direction for telefilms had not yet been learned in Britain.<sup>487</sup> Bob Baker, his business partner, did not dismiss all British writers. 'Baker and Junkin wax lyrical over the creativity and professionalism of Terry Nation...and have placed him under special contract'.<sup>488</sup> Nation had also been highly thought of by Clemens and was used to help write the final series of *The Avengers*.

The policy of ITV companies such as ABC-TV of creating new programme ideas rather than importing US ideas was to lead to the setting up of several innovative schemes for new writers and directors.<sup>489</sup> Roger Marshall, who was to go on to write for ABC-TV after failing to find employment with the BBC, found a job in their scenario department based at Elstree. He describes it as '...quite a forward looking scheme, whereby they took on young aspiring writers – there were about six of us – and we worked for two rival heads of scenario department where we learnt the rudiments of screen-writing'.<sup>490</sup>

What is noticeable from these contemporary accounts is that they lack any mention of the production design of *The Avengers*. Only later would the production design be 'found' to be a key characteristic of the show. That the production design was thought to have less priority than the script, acting and direction of the show can

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<sup>487</sup> The claim that British writers and directors did not know how to create film TV was strongly opposed by Ted Willis, who began a long correspondence debating the views of Berman and Junkin in *Kinematograph Weekly* for a few months in 1964. Willis refers to the claims against writers and directors by Berman as complacent and one-sided. See Ted Willis, 'Saint – And Sinners', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 August 1964, p. 21.

<sup>488</sup> Gruner, 'Baker and Berman's Saint Goes Marching On-And On', p. 15.

<sup>489</sup> Ken Loach was given in 1961 a traineeship as an assistant director at ABC-TV.

<sup>490</sup> Matthew Morgen Stern, 'The Marshall Chronicles', *Primetime: the Television Magazine*, no.13, winter 1987/88, pp. 2-7 (p. 2).

be further inferred from Clemens' relationship to his chief designer on the fourth series, Harry Pottle. Harry Pottle had been the designer for *The Human Jungle* and, as the resident designer for Independent Artists, he was automatically assigned to *The Avengers*. The design for *Human Jungle* had been realistic and never strayed beyond a journalistic authenticity; the set design for the fourth series of *The Avengers* appears to have been similarly restrained. This is not surprising when discovering that Pottle often had to produce drawings based on notes taken from an oral description. He cites one example from *The Master Minds* – the sixth episode of the fourth series:<sup>491</sup>

I'd be on the phone to Brian Clemens at the weekend.  
He'd say: "There's a stockbroker who lives in Surrey in a ranch-style house – you go in and there's a lounge with a bar in it and a view over the garden, a corridor, a bedroom at the end..." and so on. They'd be writing the scripts over the weekend and I'd have to have the sets designed by Monday!<sup>492</sup>

The lack of storyboards or a meeting with the production designer reinforces the sense that telefilm production in Britain generally, as well as during the fourth series of *The Avengers*, did not consider production design to be an essential ingredient, but an adjunct to the script, which depended on the idea of the writer as wordsmith, or directing that privileged the script.

Visible distinction and greater style could encourage new forms of address but it should be recalled that the fourth series of *The Avengers* was broadcast at peak time. Audience comprehension of the characters and story remained vital for a show that wished to remain a form of mass entertainment. Crucial to the argument is the need of the television industry that every programme be the same but different. However, this

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<sup>491</sup> *The Avengers*, 'The Master Minds', originally transmitted, 6 November 1965.

<sup>492</sup> Harry Pottle quoted in Piers D. Britton and Simon J. Barker, *Reading between Designs* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), p. 66.

is mainly in terms of the content rather than formal innovation, because companies are afraid the audience will stop watching out of incomprehension rather than someone might be offended by the story. The adventure series, therefore, remains stylistically predictable. For the fourth series, *The Avengers* was broadcast, according to the *TV Times*, on Thursday, Friday and Saturdays, between 9.05 and 10.05 pm.<sup>493</sup> Therefore, if it did not appeal to the family with young children, it appealed to a coalitional audience at a fairly regular time after the watershed. The address to such an audience and the issue of comprehension is relevant because the fourth series of *The Avengers* had been originally broadcast against *The Mask of Janus* on BBC1 in 1965.

Huw Wheldon, who became Controller of Programmes for BBC Television in 1965, had asked for a series like *The Mask of Janus*, a spy story, because he believed it and several other programmes would successfully challenge ITV's domination of popular drama.<sup>494</sup> The BBC series eschewed the use of action of the ITV series in favour of political intrigue and psychological exploration. The second episode had been scripted by Roger Marshall who had written for *The Avengers* on the second, third and fourth series. However, *The Mask of Janus* had been unsuccessful, decided the *Television Mail*, which in a long article explored the problems with it, and its sequel *The Spies* (1966), and compared its alleged obscurity to the lucidity of filmed television such as *Danger Man*. The key problem, the article claimed, was the 'naturalistic' style that it believed was over-used on television:

It is necessary to establish a style, or if not a style, at least a convention. Most of our directors are thinking in terms of a

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<sup>493</sup> *TV Times*, (Southern edition) 11-17 December 1965, p. 23. For example, the episode, *Man-Eater of Surrey Green*, was broadcast on Saturday after *The Arthur Haynes Show*.

<sup>494</sup> Tony Gruner, 'Ratings Race Hots Up as BBC Gets into Stride', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 August 1965, p. 21.

‘naturalistic’ style which is not necessarily right for [television] narrative. Two examples of splendid lucidity both with a style far from the naturalistic were seen on Sunday evening...*Danger Man* (ATV)...seemed to be a superb example of its genre.<sup>495</sup>

Despite the emphasis on story and character in the British telefilm, the use of film, unlike in the electronic studio, had led to the slicker ‘teleplay’ that emphasised the plot as a series of narrative arcs from one plot-line to the next, as opposed to the denser, more character-built ‘script’ which naturalistic style in TV relied on. Troy Kennedy Martin had defined naturalism as ‘people’s verbal relationships with each other.’<sup>496</sup> However, the slicker teleplay would have prefigured a more fluid use of camera which emphasised physical action or movement, rather than the static camera of the studio which emphasised the actor’s performance and a ‘naturalistic’ style.

David Buxton makes a persuasive argument that the ‘new’ spy series of the 1960s used designed surfaces that had to be correctly recognised and read rather than rely on the ‘human nature’ story. ‘*The Avengers* eliminates all trace of a human nature from its content...in favour of “glamour”, the imagery of conspicuous consumption.’<sup>497</sup> For him, a ‘pop’ series required a new, more sophisticated gaze from viewers at the expense of character, one that was prepared to derive pleasure from it. However, a basic objection to this claim is that it is at odds with the basic need for comprehension at all times on peak-time television and which Harry Junkin and Monty Berman attest to in their view that the audience were distracted: the glance rather than the gaze. Yet the antecedent to Buxton’s idea that *The Avengers* was a

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<sup>495</sup> Cyclops, ‘*The Spies: a Series Better Than Most*’, *Television Mail*, 21 January 1966, p. 26.

<sup>496</sup> Troy Kennedy Martin, ‘Nats Go Home: First Statement of a New Drama for Television’, *Encore*, no.48 (March/April, 1964), pp. 21-33 (pp. 24-5).

<sup>497</sup> David Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 96.

new kind of spy series encouraging a novel, more complex type of spectatorship, can be traced to another contemporary source.

Buxton traces to 1963 the idea that the show was abandoning fully psychologically motivated characters in favour of design codes. On the 10 March 1963, a discussion of *The Avengers*, by now in its third series, was broadcast on the BBC Radio Home Service under the aegis of *The Critics*. *The Critics* was broadcast on the Home Service from September 1947 to May 1969.<sup>498</sup> That the broadcast has assumed a key status in understanding how style came to be important in *The Avengers* can be discerned by how it recurs in written accounts of the show. It has featured in fan books as well as more serious literature about *The Avengers*.<sup>499</sup> Harry Craig, a leading member of the show, established the idea that *The Avengers* was about style. ‘*The Avengers* is a thriller that, to make no bones about it, is as empty as a dry skull...It’s impossible to watch this stupidity, this excellent stupidity, this silly excellence without being struck by black thoughts about design and vision, about content and about form. You see, it’s made brilliantly...*The Avengers* is excited surface. What is it about? Search me!’<sup>500</sup> Another remark was ‘To me, there is something very strange about brilliant technique put on trivial content’.<sup>501</sup>

These comments have to be contextualised before they can be accepted at face value, because they were being used to compare the relative poverty of the image on British television and an increased use of visual style. A greater use of style does not

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<sup>498</sup> Pat Spencer, ‘The Critics’, BBC, WAC R73/3651/1, undated.

<sup>499</sup> See Patrick Macnee and Dave Rogers, *The Avengers and Me* (London: Titan Books, 1997), p. 38 and Buxton, *From Avengers to Miami Vice*, p. 98.

<sup>500</sup> Harry Craig, ‘The Critics’. Transcribed review of the episode ‘*Conspiracy of Silence*’ on the BBC Radio Home Service, 10 March 1963, in *Stay Tuned* (*The Avengers* fan club magazine, 1986), pp. 15-17.

<sup>501</sup> Harry Craig, ‘The Critics’, pp. 15-17.

suggest, of course, the production values of today. It was because British television was considered too 'sluggish' by the Americans that Howard Thomas had charged Wintle in 1964 to use 'technical quality, equal, or even superior, to Hollywood...'. The opinion expressed by *The Critics* that the third series of *The Avengers* was 'too fast' was not one shared by US programme buyers nor would it have been endorsed by Howard Thomas as he contemplated how to sell *The Avengers* abroad. The question arises as to what else the guests on *The Critics* were watching on television if their views were not those shared by the producers of *The Avengers* or the US networks.

It should be recalled that Craig had penned several plays for the Third Programme and some critical work for the Overseas Service. However, his efforts to write for the Light Programme and Home Service in the 1950s were rejected. His work was described as having an 'individual and pungent approach and [he] writes skilfully for his own voice'.<sup>502</sup> Unfortunately, his work was generally criticised as being 'too didactic',<sup>503</sup> and as 'having an air of the inflated' and 'experimental'.<sup>504</sup> On 17 February 1958, Craig applied to join the panel of *The Critics*. He was not someone who might have been expected to be watching other telefilms or who understood that much of the style of *The Avengers* during this period was an inheritance from the 'Americanisation' of scripts practised by Roger Marshall, Harry Junkin, Terry Nation and others.

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<sup>502</sup> Eric Ewens, Assistant Script Editor (Drama Sound), 'Scriptwriter Harry Craig', memo, BBC, WAC 1A, 1947-1956, 22 March 1956.

<sup>503</sup> Francis Dillon, Controller of the Home Service, 'Scriptwriter Harry Craig', memo, BBC, WAC 1A, 1947-1956, 6 April 1956. Handwritten note at the end.

<sup>504</sup> Andrew Stewart, Controller of the Home Service, 'Scriptwriter Harry Craig', memo, BBC, WAC 1A, 1947-1956, 28 March 1956.



Nevertheless, the accelerated pace of life in the 1960s, in part represented by television shows such as *The Avengers*, was a broader cultural phenomenon that had formed part of the critical discourse for some time. The idea of the frenetic pace of life was becoming incorporated into television by the mid 1960s. The cultural change was a move from obsolete attitudes and David Buxton explains that ‘old school-tie values are not only inappropriate to the age of new technology but a liability.’<sup>505</sup> The critique of the obsolete, former ruling elite was to appear subsequently in *The Avengers*. The critique did not stop with ex-colonial elites, but, as we have seen, Buxton makes a further claim that psychological identification with characters in *The Avengers* had become dismissed as unsophisticated during the 1960s.<sup>506</sup> One was to keep the show up-to-date by allowing for the signifying of speed and an association with modernity, for which the word ‘style’ became a synonym. These included perambulating robots (*The Cybernauts*); and the use of spiral shapes and a spinning room (*The House That Jack Built*).<sup>507</sup> Honor Blackman had a Royal Enfield motorbike in 1963, but by the fifth series in 1967 Diana Rigg would have a Lotus Elan; a powder blue sports car that matched her blue tracksuit. Earlier, *Danger Man* had suggested a sense of movement and fleeting impressions by using the device of travel to foreign countries. In some ways, *The Avengers* signified a ‘structure of feeling’ in which the combination of powerful social, political and ideological structures and the fleeting, inchoate experience of these structures could be represented. In its popular appeal, the separation of ‘high’ and ‘mass’ culture on

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<sup>505</sup> Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, p. 87.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>507</sup> *The Avengers*, ‘The Cybernauts’, originally transmitted, 16 October 1965 and *The House That Jack Built*, originally transmitted, 5 March 1966.

which modernism depended, had broken down and various forms of high and popular culture were able to freely intermingle in a new dominant aesthetic mode of pastiche or formal opportunism.

In these ways, kinetic appeal, the promise and pleasure of watching action, became an important part of adventure television of the mid 1960s, as much as the characters and the script; the ability to show physical action and the movement in space, which became central to its generic identity. It was one of the reasons why the spy or adventure series was able to compete with the crime thriller or else transform it in the early 1960s.<sup>508</sup> The sense of modernity associated with being ‘on the move’ had existed as long ago as the first editorial in *TV Times* in 1955 ‘Now it’s the “go” signal, the green light for TV too – with no brake on enterprise and imagination...’<sup>509</sup> Four weeks later, *TV Times* would celebrate in its leading article how television is a ‘smoothly flowing, continuous moving picture...’<sup>510</sup>

To take a specific example of how these cultural movements helped form a specific mode in television, the railway carriage scene with Ronald Fraser playing Sir Horace Winslip in *The Gravediggers* (the second episode of the fourth series) makes apparent some of the ways the programme-makers opened up an exploration of several themes to do with speed, change and obsolescence.<sup>511</sup> Here a television series could respond to flow by changing its address to the audience as the defining style of the programme. In the episode, the country’s early warning radar system is failing,

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<sup>508</sup> Besides what was going on in British TV, an obvious example of this transformation was how the 1963-65 US crime series, *Burke’s Law*, was reworked and re-titled in 1965 as *Amos Burke – Secret Agent*.

<sup>509</sup> Anon, ‘Editorial’, *TV Times*, 22 September – 1 October 1955, p. 3. See chapter 1, p. 58 for the complete quote.

<sup>510</sup> Ronald Tiltman, ‘It’s the Speed of TV that Deceives the Eye’, *TV Times*, 28 October 1955, p. 3.

<sup>511</sup> *The Avengers*, ‘The Gravediggers’, originally transmitted, 9 October 1965.

threatening the security of the nation, and Steed and Emma are charged with finding out why. The trail takes Steed to a hospital for railway men and the home of a financier, Sir Horace, obsessed by steam trains and travel.

The theme of moving through physical space after the relative stasis of the preceding scenes becomes ascendant as we watch Fraser, who plays a highly eccentric train enthusiast, entertain Steed for lunch onboard a mock-up of a steam train in his living room. But this celebration of the thrill of speed is used for comic effect as well as creating a discourse about British imperialism and an earlier age of more decorous, civilised travel and its attendant comforts. The significance of movement within a physical space in this episode of *The Avengers*, rather than existing as a formal device that is self-sufficient, goes beyond the pictorial. *The Gravediggers* represents a contemporary obsession for the pace of change to produce a threnody for the obsolescence of the steam age, prefigured by *John Betjeman Goes by Train* (1962).<sup>512</sup> As Fraser explains: ‘The Iron Horse, magnificent creature...murdered by the motor car. Line after line closing down...’

*The Gravediggers* establishes, thematically as well as materially, a broader discourse for several episodes of *The Avengers* which codified a different, more ideological understanding of movement between the proximate worlds of the past and future, between Victorian steam power and Empire and Harold Wilson’s ‘white heat of technology’. At the beginning of *The Gravediggers* the cool sleekness of the radar stations and the silence of their invisible rays (and, by implication, the invisible rays

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<sup>512</sup> A short documentary film made by British Transport Films and BBC East Anglia in which Benjamin celebrates the virtues of the branch line about to close forever after the Beeching Axe. I have been unable to discover the exact 1962 original transmission date.

of television) are contrasted, for comic effect, with the cacophony of the mock-up train in Sir Horace's drawing-room.

If steam railways opened up new physical territories and psychological spaces in the nineteenth century, the *Gravediggers* opens up new territories in popular television by establishing a discourse that sets older values in contradiction with newer values. 'Gladstone [a steam locomotive] was averaging a speed of sixty miles per hour in 1890. They pulled up the tracks to make a road for motor cars...you're lucky if you can average twenty miles per hour on it now', declares Sir Horace. Not content with a simple celebration of the car against the old-fashioned train, in an instant, the episode punctures the myth of the modern motor car and its equation with speed by replacing it with well-placed social satire about clogged roads.<sup>513</sup> However, Sir Horace is clearly representative of the past and hostile to the modern world. The programme continues to parody the obsolescence of the past, including a parody of the silent movie cliché of the heroine tied to the tracks of a railway as a locomotive heads towards her – will Steed rescue Emma in time? In these small ways a popular text like *The Avengers* can be seen to have been responding to contemporary concerns post-Beeching and on its own terms dealing with the political and social rather than a script limited to a set formula.

Besides a conventional clash of good and evil, there was a knowingness in the written style of a British adventure series that could appeal to the 'sophisticated' viewer. Contrary to what Eco had proposed in his idea of a 'narrating machine', the referents to style were in the programme, but had to be recognised and interpreted by

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<sup>513</sup> One of the many claims made to justify the building of the motorways in the 1960s was that they would solve the problem of traffic jams on Britain's main roads. See Robin Jones, *Beeching: 50 Years of the Axeman* (Horncastle: Mortons Media Group, 2011), pp. 20-21.

a 'knowing' audience. Comic quips and irony would encourage a more complex viewing than would be assumed from a programme that was television mass-entertainment. For example, in *The Avengers* episode, *The Man Eater of Surrey Green*, the entrance hall of a mansion belongs to an eccentric botanist. Steed, left in the hall, approaches one of the vine-covered mannequins and bemused by its 'clothing' remarks, 'Come the autumn, I hope to see more of you.'<sup>514</sup> However, Buxton's additional claim has to be measured when he claims that psychological identification with characters in *The Avengers* became dismissed as unsophisticated and realism was eschewed for 'carefully posed scenes which do little more than show off the ideological determinations of the heroes...'<sup>515</sup>

Nevertheless, a new formula was used when programmes ceased to appeal to a homogenous audience and became the complex relationship between a television series and a highly differentiated audience, including an internationalised one. In *The Avengers*, the Americanisation of the scripts operated to recruit new audiences, as well as continue to deploy values and themes associated with British culture. In its use of the themes of modernity and obsolescence, the fourth series of *The Avengers* continued to parody some aspects of post-imperial ideologies. For example, in *Death at Bargain Prices* (the fourth episode of the fourth series), the lead villain, Horatio Kane, threatens London because of his antipathy to the modern world and its consumerist culture: 'Discontinued lines. Relics of a bygone age, Steed. A glorious

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<sup>514</sup> *The Avengers*, 'The Man Eater of Surrey Green', originally transmitted, 11 December 1965.

<sup>515</sup> Buxton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, p.118.

age! Gracious, leisurely, ordered. A machine was a thing of joy then, built to last a man's lifetime. Now it's out of date before it's left the assembly line...'<sup>516</sup>

### ***Adam Adamant Lives! Old-fashioned Adventurer (1966-67)***

The pairing of an upper-class adventurer and a 'with-it' woman of the 1960s in *Adam Adamant*, made by the BBC and shown in 1966-67, has drawn parallels with *The Avengers*. It should be remembered that the 1960s was the decade when Hugh Carleton Greene, the Director General of the BBC, was seeking to make the organisation reflect the new affluent, consumer culture. The series was originally transmitted on Saturday during a regular time slot of 8.00 – 8.50pm, after *Top of the Pops* and before the news at 8.50.<sup>517</sup> It was likely to have been a show aimed at families with younger children and teenagers. An article in the *Radio Times* explained the purpose of the new show: 'Think of everything that is best and noblest in our British public-school tradition...Then think of these qualities embodied in a single, splendid hero, and you have Adam Llewellyn de Vere Adamant, gentleman-adventurer, righter of wrongs and upholder of true moral principles.'<sup>518</sup> Anthony Clark has referred to him as 'more age-of-empire adventurer than spoof spy.'<sup>519</sup> However, Roger Marshall believes that the BBC was trying to cash in on the success of *The Avengers*. Marshall's reputation as a writer on *The Avengers* and *The Mask of Janus* had led Sydney Newman, the BBC Head of Drama, to ask him to write the pilot

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<sup>516</sup> *The Avengers*, 'Death at Bargain Prices', originally transmitted, 23 October 1965.

<sup>517</sup> *Radio Times*, 23 June 1966, p. 47.

<sup>518</sup> Anon, Untitled, *Radio Times*, 23 June 1966, p. 43.

<sup>519</sup> Anthony Clark, 'Adam Adamant Lives!' <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/517661/>> [accessed December 2010].

for *Adam Adamant*.<sup>520</sup> However, Marshall refused, alleging time pressures, but looking back on the series he was to say ‘It [Adamant] was as much a rip off of *The Avengers* as they could do without being sued...Like *Target* was a rip-off of *The Sweeney*. And not a very good one at that.’<sup>521</sup>

It was here in *Adam Adamant* that visual style had, by the mid 1960s, become a marker of televisual quality and its absence reflected not only on the show, but on the institutional needs of the BBC to produce a programme that was not simply popular, but could become an arbiter of culture by allowing for a complex, sophisticated form of viewing. *Adam Adamant* was intended to be ‘not just a winner, but the sort of winner dear to the Corporation’s heart: one that not only attracts the mass audience, but also tastes pungent and flavoursome on the jaded palates of intellectuals’.<sup>522</sup>

Reactions to the series by contemporary viewers can be gauged from the letters sent to the *Radio Times*. The first letter to be published about the series was negative in its opinion. Entitled ‘Back Projection’, it made its complaint ingeniously if cuttingly, ‘Viewers curious about the scholastic achievements of *Adam Adamant* may be interested to learn that he was the discoverer of the famous palindrome: “Madam, I’m Adam” which, like some episodes in this BBC-1 series, sounds exactly the same when read backwards.’<sup>523</sup> The next letter was, however, more positive, because the episodes reminded the viewer of favourite adventure books they had read

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<sup>520</sup> Roger Marshall wrote for the videotaped and film series of *The Avengers* including ‘classic’ episodes such as *The Hour That Never Was*, originally broadcast, November 1965.

<sup>521</sup> Roger Marshall quoted in Matthew Morgen Stern, ‘The Marshall Chronicles’, *Primetime*, no.13, Winter 1987/88, p. 4.

<sup>522</sup> Cyclops, ‘Professional Eye on Programmes’, *Television Mail*, 8 July 1966, p. 23.

<sup>523</sup> A. Kellett, ‘Back Projection’, *Radio Times*, 28 July 1966, p.2.

written by Hope, Buchan and Fleming.<sup>524</sup> A final letter confirmed an interest in the show, because of its ‘good manners’ at the expense of a more modern ‘brashness’ embodied in Adam’s sidekick, Georgina, a ‘with-it’ girl from a Soho discotheque.<sup>525</sup> Any success the show appeared to have had relied on an interest in its deliberately archaic lead character as the embodiment of resistance to social changes that were affecting Britain. The last two letters reveal a distaste for ‘scruffy and uncouth anti-heroes’ and a nostalgic pleasure in Adam’s charm and elegance.

*Adam Adamant* was shot on videotape with film inserts by BBC house directors such as Moira Armstrong, Anthea Brown-Wilkinson, Philip Dudley and Roger Jenkins. James Chapman observes that the visual style of the series (from the surviving episodes) ‘displays a tension between realism (the preponderance of close shots recalls early television’s “intimate drama”) and fantasy, the unusual camera angles and occasional blurring of focus...’<sup>526</sup> The ability to appeal to an audience capable of complex or sophisticated viewing had, previously to *Adamant*, opened up the possibility that television style, rather than being fixed as it had been in the 1950s, could be a less bounded and stable object of analysis. However, by the second episode of *Adam Adamant*, *Death Has a Thousand Faces*<sup>527</sup> ‘the style observable in the first episode was disastrously absent; the director [Philip Dudley] had exchanged his brilliantly impressionistic techniques for a leaden-footed realism, with the camera

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<sup>524</sup> B. P. Brook, ‘Victorian Adventurer’, *Radio Times*, 1 September 1966, p. 2.

<sup>525</sup> E.M. Logan, ‘It’s Been Fun’, *Radio Times*, 27 October 1966, p. 2.

<sup>526</sup> Chapman, *Saints and Avengers*, p. 140.

<sup>527</sup> *Adam Adamant*, ‘Death Has a Thousand Faces’, originally transmitted, 30 June 1966. A man is stabbed to death and Adam fears strange forces are taking hold of Blackpool.



dwelling for long meaningless shots on Blackpool trams and the Tower itself.

Fantasy was absent, tragically absent.<sup>528</sup>

Clearly the BBC believed that film inserts could lend extra-diegetic 'colour', but institutionally, they failed to appreciate how outdated this practice was in an era when 'local colour' was no longer made up of simply putting the camera outside and filming four minutes or so of exterior shots. Instead, style, particularly fantasy style, was a more diverse art ethic, that initially had meant a greater sense of change and fleeting impression in the adventure shows of the mid 1960s, but were to be informed by the art schools, and men like Peter Blake, mixing graphic design with painting to produce Pop Art.<sup>529</sup> In the British adventure series, engagement with its audience can be understood as encouraging a form of 'active' spectatorship that could resist a dominant set of ideas about what television was. Therefore, an analysis of the discourse in the action-adventure of the 1960s should not altogether attempt to interpret what the programme 'really means'. Instead, surface enunciations should be mapped out onto larger cultural contexts. For example, the use of fantasy in a show, such as *The Prisoner*, from the late 1960s can be used to acknowledge the ways narrative and style created new physical and psychological spaces to create a discourse of the implausible and the absurd against other institutional discourses set by the BBC and ITV that favoured, at times, realism. Nevertheless, this assumes a sophisticated audience, including younger viewers such as teenagers, willing to be engaged by the newer discourses of the period formed by social and political change.

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<sup>528</sup> Cyclops, 'Professional Eye on Programmes', p.23.

<sup>529</sup> Sir Peter Thomas Blake is an English pop artist, best known for his design of the sleeve for the Beatles' album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

It was only by the late 1960s that the new aesthetic paradigm for both ITC and ABC-TV was something that could be less bounded by realism, based on the written word, than it had been. A programme like *The Prisoner* could be used to generate debates around television's function, specifically the use of film on television, and the invention of a social space that touches upon genre and authorship as much as consumption. It was contemporary because it relied on a sense of action and style that combined an adult, intelligent approach to its subject matter with a style of presentation derived from the best that film had to offer and contemporary modes of thought and its appeal to youth.

### ***The Prisoner: Counter-Culture Adventure (1967-68)***

The original closeness of *The Prisoner* with *Danger Man* can be observed in some of the early reviews when it was expected that the former would be a continuation of the latter. A reviewer at the time explained:

*The Prisoner* is, as everybody knows, Patrick McGoochan's escape from *Dangerman* (sic). *Dangerman* was a secret agent, incredibly resourceful and astonishingly brave; the stories were as full as gadgetry as of hairbreath scrapes; right was inevitably if tediously triumphant. Oddly enough, McGoochan has not really escaped from *Dangerman*; he is the lone hero taking arms against a cast of enemies...right, so far, has precariously triumphed. The series is intelligent in concept; each episode is written and performed with a good deal of polish; the whole thing has that unstrained and laconic effectiveness which usually means good television.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Anon, 'Professional Eye on Programmes', *Television Mail*, 27 October 1967, p. 26.

One difference, however, that the reviewer noted was that ‘[*The Prisoner*] is the victim of elaborate gadgetry on the psychological rather than the physical plane’.<sup>531</sup>

By the final episodes of *Danger Man* much of the gadgetry had been dropped and the character of John Drake, almost as a precursor to *The Prisoner*, was becoming more psychologically rounded.

*The Prisoner* has been praised as ‘ahead of its time’ and ‘beyond category’.<sup>532</sup> However most, if not all, programmes, in an industrialised medium, rely on diachronic developments to reveal their origins. Chris Rodley has described the show ‘as a spy thriller consciously constructed around more profound notions of the individual versus the system, personal freedom and personal prisons’.<sup>533</sup> The attempt at ‘psychology’ as opposed to ‘physical’ violence set it apart from the other programmes being made by ITC at the time; *The Saint* (1962-69) and *The Baron* (1966-67), and a further attempt to appeal to a culturally active audience. However, as an exchange commodity destined for overseas, principally American, sales, *The Prisoner* would continue to use the condensation and simplification of the television series format.

It was in *The Prisoner* that the formula of the action-adventure, using a realistic strategy established in shows such as *Danger Man*, was re-energised by absurdist devices. Elements in the programme such as the mysterious white balloon, Rover, first seen at the end of *Arrival* and named in *The Schizoid Man*<sup>534</sup> (episode 5), became one of the most surreal images of the whole series. Meanwhile, the

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<sup>531</sup> Anon, ‘Professional Eye on Programmes’, 1967, p.26.

<sup>532</sup> Ian Rakoff, *Inside The Prisoner: Radical Television and Film in the 1960s* (London: Batsford, 1998), p. 158.

<sup>533</sup> Chris Rodley, ‘Degree Absolute’, *Primetime*, vol.1, no.3, March-May 1982, pp. 14-18 (p. 15).

<sup>534</sup> *The Prisoner*, ‘The Schizoid Man’, originally transmitted, 27 October 1967.

symbolism of the Penny Farthing bicycle which is wheeled around the Village, usually by the Butler, was described by McGoohan as:

...an ironic symbol of progress...the Penny Farthing bicycle represents a simpler age. We live in an era where science is advancing so quickly, you don't have time to learn about the latest innovations before something new arises; making what you've learned obsolete. It's the same with the newspapers. They're so busy cranking out information that before you can have a chance to digest it, they're cramming something else down your throat! Everything is moving very fast, possibly too fast...before its time.<sup>535</sup>

This idea of rapid change has already been explored in the context of the fourth series of *The Avengers*, but deserves some further investigation here. The notion that life was changing faster and faster – in everything from technology to culture - was the basis of a kind of ‘culture shock’ of the future. *The Prisoner* prefigured some of the concerns of *Future Shock*, written by Alvin Toffler and published in 1970.<sup>536</sup> Toffler described information in contemporary society as being a ‘kinetic image’ moving with blinding speed in and out of consciousness. What was being discovered here was the fallacy that science and technology could only progress to bigger and better things. Instead the populist view of progress and consumption, a viewpoint that presumed an interaction between consumer and manufacturer, in much the way television programming is shaped by its audience, became more pessimistic in *The Prisoner*.

This pessimism is critiqued in *The Prisoner* episode, *The General*.<sup>537</sup> The story is about ‘speedlearn’ – a way to educate the population subliminally through

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<sup>535</sup> Patrick McGoohan quoted in Matthew White and Ali Jaffer, *The Official Prisoner Companion* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988), p. 171.

<sup>536</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (London: Bodley Head, 1970)

<sup>537</sup> *The Prisoner*, ‘The General’, originally transmitted, 3 November 1967.

television images. For the Prisoner this is a transfer of information that is a form of brainwashing, but is offered in the programme as a modern advance of instilling facts, without a proper insight into their meaning. The Village inhabitants watch a series of strobing images and repeat facts about Modern History. Interestingly, A.J.P. Taylor was presenting his own lectures on television at the time, in which he would try to elucidate a complex topic from Modern European History in only 30 minutes.<sup>538</sup> The Prisoner's reaction is to reject this 'modern' form of learning in favour of breaking into the Village Projection Room and attempting to substitute his own transmission for the evening's history class. Commenting on the scene McGooohan was to explain: 'Their souls have been brainwashed out of them. Watching too many commercials is what happened to them'.<sup>539</sup>

Similarly, Toffler wrote of the transience of late twentieth century life as presented by ephemeral images, again echoing a common criticism of television at the time. Instant food, instant communication and even instant cities drew attention to the speed with which cultural information was reproduced, distributed, internalised, and rendered obsolete in the 1960s. 'In the past,' Toffler argued, 'one rarely saw a fundamental change in an art within a man's lifetime. Today the pace of turnover in art is vision-blurring – the viewer scarcely has time to "see" a school develop, to learn its language, so to speak, before it vanishes'.<sup>540</sup> For Toffler, kinetic art in particular allegorised the mounting acceleration of the art world and its movement, and the

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<sup>538</sup> John Oliver, 'Taylor, A.J.P.,' *BFI Screenonline* <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/838462/>> [accessed January 2011].

<sup>539</sup> Warner Troyer, 'Interview with Patrick McGooohan', 1977. This interview can be found on various websites and has not been published to my knowledge. <<http://www.the-prisoner-6.freemove.co.uk/troyer.htm>> [accessed January 2011].

<sup>540</sup> Toffler, *Future Shock*, p.154.

various indoctrination and brainwashing devices in *The Prisoner* helped to represent this theme of kinetic change.

Catherine Johnson has argued that *The Prisoner* was to exploit a criterion for serious programming formed by the earlier Pilkington Committee Report (1962) that, in turn, had instilled a desire in ITV to produce 'serious entertainment'.<sup>541</sup> The Report had cast the responsibilities of the public service broadcaster in terms of engaging an active viewer through the production of challenging and experimental programming. According to John Caughie, 'For Pilkington, this imperative was tied to the moral responsibilities of citizenship, of a citizen who has the rights of choice but also the responsibilities of judgment'.<sup>542</sup> In this way, *The Prisoner* can be understood as an experiment in British television of the late 1960s that offered a different entertainment pattern from the formulaic norms of adventure series television by proposing a critique of many of the utopian claims of the liberatory potential of science and technology.

It was another contemporary commentator, Marshall McLuhan, who had discussed, in the 1960s, the human body's relationship to television and television's control of its audience. He stated that:

Perhaps the most familiar and pathetic effect of the TV image is the posture of children in the early grades...With perfect psycho-mimetic skill, they carry out commands of the TV. They pore, they probe, they slow down, and involve themselves in depth...Pointlessly they strive to read print in depth. They bring to print all their senses, and

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<sup>541</sup> Catherine Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), pp. 46-51.

<sup>542</sup> John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 83.

print rejects them. Print asks for the isolated and stripped down visual faculty, not for the unified sensorium.<sup>543</sup>

Some of this argument came from the view that television, unlike books and publishing, was able to contain within itself an interaction between an oral and literate culture. Jack Goody and Ian Watt had indicated the effects of this development: the channels of mass communication 'derive much of their effectiveness as agencies of social orientation from the fact that their media do not have the abstract and solitary quality of reading and writing, but on the contrary share some of the nature and impact of the direct personal interaction which obtains in oral cultures.'<sup>544</sup> The belief that one effect of a medium which combined the two distinct cultures had led to a contradiction between modes of perception was to lead McLuhan to speculate that there was an occasional mutuality depending on the exact nature of the medium. He made a distinction between a 'cool' and a 'hot' media:

There is a basic principle that distinguishes a hot medium like radio from a cool one like the telephone, or a hot medium like the movie from a cool one like TV. A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in 'high definition'. High definition is the state of being well filled with data...Telephone is a cool medium, or one of low definition, because the ear is given a meager amount of information...On the other hand, hot media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience. Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience.<sup>545</sup>

Television was a cool medium (but capable of warming up) because of its low resolution image and demanded mutuality with the audience. The individualistic and

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<sup>543</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994; originally published 1964), p. 308.

<sup>544</sup> J. Goody and I. Watt, 'The Consequences of Literacy' in P.P. Giglioli (ed.), *Language and Social Context* (London: Penguin, 1972), pp. 311-357 (p. 347).

<sup>545</sup> McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p. 22.

literate culture identified by Good and Watt would be replaced by television as a channel of mass communication.

It must be admitted that McLuhan has been attacked by Raymond Williams and others because of his apparent refusal to treat any mass medium as a specific practice imbricated in existing economic and social power structures. In 1974, Williams was to say that 'As descriptions of any observable social state or tendency' McLuhan's images of society were 'ludicrous.'<sup>546</sup> Yet if *The Prisoner* can be read as a post-modern text, in which communication between the programme maker and the audience becomes vital, McLuhan's writings about a hot and cold medium become more acceptable. Its bizarre subject matter and attempt at crossing genres, and later, its cult status and obsessive fans, suggest a more modern form of television and televisuality since the 1980s. McLuhan's aphorism that the 'medium is the message' means that the 'knowledge that a medium transmits is greater than the knowledge that people transmit using it'.<sup>547</sup> Here a programme can take into account the tastes of its audiences and there is a relationship in which two equally sophisticated sides are engaged in a contest of symbol-manipulation and symbol interpretation. *The Prisoner*, as a historical example of a nascent televisuality, can be understood as a programming tool that was used to break down the ontological distinctions between an oral/literary media as well as a cool/hot media and fiction/reality.

A critique of television in *The Prisoner* utilised other sources, but continues to demonstrate how ontological distinctions between fact and fiction were broken down to appeal to the 'sophisticated' viewer. Modernism, as it had been articulated by

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<sup>546</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.128.

<sup>547</sup> Arjen Mulder, *Understanding Media Theory: Language, Image, Sound, Behaviour* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2004), p. 16.



cultural commentators such as Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Roszak,<sup>548</sup> had decried technological rationality and the ascendant technology of the 1960s. They were not just referring to television, but to what Marcuse would call a logic of domination or administration which had been internalised socially, culturally and politically. At the same time, although this logic had been internalised, the consumer was to a degree conflicted. By the early 1960s, there was already a growing awareness of the ‘hidden persuaders’ within advertising or, according to Marcuse, a distinction between true and false consciousness. He would describe the alienated thinking of American car buyers of the early 1960s in his book *One Dimensional Man*:

I ride in a new automobile. I experience its beauty, shininess, power, convenience – but then I become aware of the fact that in a relatively short time it will deteriorate and need repair; that its beauty and surface are cheap, its power unnecessary, its size idiotic; and that I will not find a parking space. I come to think of *my* car as a product of one of the Big Three automobile corporations.<sup>549</sup>

By becoming a global text in the 1960s, especially with the addition of colour, as we have seen in chapter three, television, equipped with the power of sculpting and making passive bodies, was also displaying a kind of consumer fantasy. Yet Marcuse was aware that his ‘one-dimensional’ society was able to unite opposites between alienation and freedom and cancel the dialectic. As he explains:

One-Dimensional Man will vacillate throughout between two contradictory hypotheses: (1) that advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future; (2) that forces and tendencies exist

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<sup>548</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964) and Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture : Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970)

<sup>549</sup> Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, p. 226.

which may break this containment and explode the society.  
I do not think that a clear answer can be given.<sup>550</sup>

The argument is that no meaningful resistance is available in a society that ‘contains’ all potential opposition.

To critique the methods that a US style technocracy utilises to contain resistance to it, Patrick McGoochan was to fetishise the normal television conventions of the action-adventure. In *Arrival*, after being drugged and kidnapped, McGoochan goes groggily to his window and is confronted by a scene of a picture-perfect vista of Portmeirion rather than the expected London cityscape.<sup>551</sup> The audience is given a clear signal that the programme will be about perception and viewing – looking at things, looking through things and being looked at. Throughout the series, the act of watching is fetishised: the chief administrator of the Village, Number Two, appears on the Prisoner’s television set and converses with him. Meanwhile, the operatives in the Control Room observe Number Two while he observes the Prisoner’s activities. In these ways, *The Prisoner* forms a powerful critique of its own methods of containing opposition by observation as well as persuasion.

Nevertheless, *The Prisoner* adopted, in many ways, the generic conventions and narrative codes of the 1960s television adventure series that Julian Wintle and others had used. These series had pitted their protagonists against villainous individuals and organisations, combining elements of the detective, thriller and science fiction genres in the use of intriguing narratives and action-packed

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<sup>550</sup> Ibid., p.xlvii.

<sup>551</sup> *The Prisoner*, ‘Arrival’, originally transmitted, 29 September 1967.

denouements. The first episode of *The Prisoner*, *Arrival*, promised to fulfil all of these generic expectations.

The opening credits show McGoochan driving into London, entering a building and resigning. The central London setting and the man he resigns to in a dark suit are followed by a shot of a cavernous filing system, confirming there is a vast machinery controlled by a secret organisation that keeps its population under strict surveillance. The exotic location to which Number Six is taken is also in keeping with the conventional use of locations in *Danger Man*. However, although *The Prisoner* sets up these generic expectations, they were consistently undercut and unfulfilled. The identity of the organisation from which Number Six resigned is never revealed, and references to the spy genre are only implied rather than asserted. The Village that the Prisoner is taken to may be run by a villainous organisation or by a government, but its exact nature is never revealed.

In the 1960s, television was still a relatively new form of mass entertainment. Although it had become a force in its own right, the medium had not yet become self-reflexive. *The Prisoner* was breaking new ground because, although it was a popular adventure series, it was also about the expressive possibilities of television and the power of mass communication. As it probed the viewer's status as passive watcher, however, the portrayal of technology, unlike much of *The Avengers*, was anything but attractive and consumer-oriented. It became a condemnation of technology-oriented Western materialism and the essential purpose of *The Prisoner* was to raise questions

about the relationship between self and society in the technocracy of the ‘Global Village’.<sup>552</sup>

Again, the source for these thematic concerns can be traced back to the threat posed by the growth of the ‘information society’. The overcoming of distance in television – a modality of seeing at a distance – could, in an information-obsessed society and the age of the Global Village, mean that in *The Prisoner* technology was not represented in a complimentary manner, but signalled a loss of control and surveillance of the individual. The technological optimism of the early to mid 1960s and a neutral modernity were replaced in *The Prisoner* by the concerns of the counter-culture that technology and consumer capitalism were a threat to individual freedom. The new technological credo of the 1960s, which television was such a part of, and that can be seen in *Danger Man* and *The Avengers*, had expressed a modernist utopian yearning in opposition to the past. It had created a meta-narrative of modernity and progress whether of cosmopolitan travel or the replacing of the Age of Steam by an electronic-based modernity. In *The Prisoner*, this meta-narrative is rejected or, at least, problematised within emergent paradigms of post-modernism. For example, the series appropriated the iconography of the pop series, the disposable and brightly coloured furniture that signified both modernity and obsolescence such as the Arancio ‘Globe’ chair and the lava lamps, but, unlike *The Avengers*, chose not to celebrate their consumerist chic. The rising globules of the lava lamp would be visible in the

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<sup>552</sup> McLuhan’s argument about the effects of television and globalisation was to have an effect on McGoochan’s making of *The Prisoner*. It was also part of the Sixties zeitgeist and introduced into the language a number of precepts, among them ‘Global Village’ and ‘Age of Information’ that had found its way into the *TV Times* (Southern) when Philip Purser wrote ‘Our Village’ for the week 6 – 12 January 1968, pp. 3-4.

often seen sequence that showed the underwater birth of a Rover being sent in a search and destroy mission of a dissident or would-be escapee. Moreover, film of the lamps bubbling often appeared on the screen in Number Two's room as a backdrop to his confrontations with Number Six.

The appeal to aesthetic value was linked to a strong emphasis on McGooohan as the author of the series. The contributions of other writers, directors and producers to the series were overlooked in the promotion of *The Prisoner* as a 'single-authored' series. In a move typical of the publicity promoting the series at the time of its transmission, the *TV Times* attributed the creativity of the series to McGooohan's authorship:

McGooohan believes that he is breaking into completely new television territory – in presentation and stories alike. The idea is his own. He is also the executive producer. He has taken over the direction of many of the sequences (but without giving himself a screen credit for this). He has buried himself in the cutting-room during the editing of the episodes. And he has worked on every script, irrespective of who may have written it...his aim is to demonstrate that [television thrillers] can contain food for thought...<sup>553</sup>

The image that McGooohan elected to use was as colourful as the filmed series he had created. When interviewed by the press about the show he was photographed inside an iron-barred cage which was 'big enough to house a pride of lions with two men dressed like Venetian gondoliers. And Patrick McGooohan in a Russian fur hat and in a crimson Cossack-style robe.'<sup>554</sup> The fact that the show was on a Sunday, the last day of the Great British weekend, a day of boredom and inactivity (satirised a few

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<sup>553</sup> Anon, 'New on Southern This Week', *TV Times*, 30 September-6 October 1967, p. 4.

<sup>554</sup> Anthony Davis, 'The Extraordinary Mr McGooohan', *TV Times*, 14-20 October 1967, p. 30.

years earlier by Tony Hancock) would have built up anticipation of an exciting ‘unmissable’ programme to watch before starting the working week on Monday.<sup>555</sup>

ITC’s promotional material for the series appealed to the ‘active’ viewer but, at the same time, promised mass entertainment with its familiar pleasures of the generic action-adventure series. It promised *The Prisoner* would provide:

The most challenging and unusual series ever filmed for television, devised by Patrick McGoochan himself. It is a series with depth, stories that will make viewers think, and, at the same time, will keep them on the edge of their seats in excitement as The Prisoner resists every physical and mental effort to break him. There is mounting suspense as each new dramatic story is unfolded... Viewing appeal which is simultaneously electrifying, controversial and gripping.<sup>556</sup>

A distinction has to be made between the identical telefilm look of many adventure programmes of the 1960s, and the distinct ideas, character and ingenuity of *The Prisoner*’s ‘serious’ narrative. Already in *Danger Man*, in episodes such as *The Ubiquitous Mr Lovegrove*, but particularly in *The Prisoner*, McGoochan’s professional identification with the television industry became evident in his very ‘visual signature’ and use of the latest television technology. However, it should be acknowledged that use of the conventional techniques of scriptwriting for television, detected earlier in *The Avengers*, also led some critics to find the stories of *The Prisoner* to be less innovatory than has been claimed by later fans of the show:

Series as diverse as *The Professionals* and *The Prisoner* all work on the still-classic ‘Hollywood’ principles of strength through terseness and twist as texture, so that even as the story develops through the three acts, it’s also a structure (a montage) of local surprises; whence an enormous surface

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<sup>555</sup> Hancock’s *Half Hour*, ‘Sunday Afternoon at Home’, originally transmitted, 1959.

<sup>556</sup> Quoted in Alain Carraze and Helene Oswald, *The Prisoner: a Televisionary Masterpiece* (London: W.H. Allen, 1990), pp. 220-1.

tension. Occasionally, dramas are less professional and betray an 'Eng. Lit.' concern with consistency and 'authenticity of texture' at the expense of coherent contradiction, economical implication and swift development.<sup>557</sup>

Nevertheless, what had been originally conceived as a controlled experiment in the subversion of some dominant television practices within the popular series format, it has been argued, had become a rupture of accepted practices.<sup>558</sup> But, crucially, this understanding of *The Prisoner* relies on the generic hybridity that we have traced since the late 1950s. Jane Feuer has suggested that since the 1980s the typical viewing experience for television has been characterised as a rapid flow from one genre to another.<sup>559</sup> For Jim Collins, generic hybridity has created what he refers to as 'tonal variation'.

At one moment, the conventions of a genre are taken 'seriously,' in another scene, they might be subjected to [a]...sort of ambivalent parody...These generic and tonal variations occur within scenes as well as across scenes, sometimes oscillating on a line by line basis, or across episodes...<sup>560</sup>

Yet, the 'tonal variation' of form has been visible on television since before the 1980s. In some of the adventure shows of the 1960s, these tonal variations were as much a shifting between action, adventure and spectacle that could travel across national boundaries and creative personnel as they were of character and dialogue that explored the dimensions of new physical and psychological spaces.

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<sup>557</sup> Raymond Durnat, 'The Wonder of Everything', *Primetime*, vol. 1, no. 1, July 1981, p. 8.

<sup>558</sup> Chris Rodley, 'Degree Absolute', *Primetime*, vol.1, no.3, March-May 1982, pp. 14-18 (p. 17).

<sup>559</sup> Feuer uses the series *Hill Street Blues* and *St.Elsewhere* as examples of genre hybridity. See Jane Feuer, 'Genre Study and Television' in Robert C. Allen (ed.), *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 113-133 (p. 131).

<sup>560</sup> Jim Collins, 'Television and Postmodernism', in Robert C. Allen (ed.), *Channels of Discourse Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 327-51 (pp. 345-6).

The letters page of the *TV Times* was evenly balanced for and against *The Prisoner*.<sup>561</sup> The appeal of the show to the habitual viewers of prime time television suggests that the act of television spectatorship, rather than a ‘diverting gaze’, became in the mid to late 1960s more of a sophisticated act of concentrated viewing. Kingsley Amis had already argued in 1964 that ‘the last time I wrote for *TV Times* I ended up wishing someone would notice that “the average viewer is about twice as intelligent and serious-minded as the powers-that-be evidently think he is”’.<sup>562</sup> His claim was that British programmes were behind American telefilms technically ‘When, for instance, are we going to hear a British-made revolver shot that sounds like a revolver shot instead of a cap pistol going off in a plastic bag?’<sup>563</sup> The growing technical polish of the telefilm adventure drama, following this logic, by the late 1960s, had led to a greater sophistication that could appeal to a spectator who would be encouraged to enjoy a greater concentration of viewing.

However, there was a suspicion, according to Amis, that what was provided in *The Avengers* was a ‘fake sophistication’; a *prima facie* avant-garde drama, but nothing more than simple-minded entertainment that depended on a passive audience. But another possibility exists, for example, of a potential mutuality first proposed by McLuhan watching the cold medium of television, but one in which the medium was warming-up. In this way, it was possible to have a symbiosis between a cold and hot medium: from everyday TV to plots that went from one fantastic event to another and which could reflect the tastes and intelligence of a popular audience; one positioned

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<sup>561</sup> Anon, ‘Viewerpoint’, *TV Times* (Southern), 17-23 February 1968, p. 16.

<sup>562</sup> Kingsley Amis, ‘Looking-in is Looking Up!’, *TV Times*, 9-15 February 1964, p. 7.

<sup>563</sup> Amis, ‘Looking-in is Looking Up!’, p. 7.



by the show to share a joke with the performers or understand a serious point about ‘technocracy’.

The sophisticated adventure show can be argued to have conformed to the rules of a complex game, but rules that were not so restricted as to function simply as Eco’s ‘narrating machine’. Dave Rogers writes that whatever its ultimate aim, *The Prisoner* deserves to be seen over and over again, but not to reveal its ‘hidden’ meaning.<sup>564</sup> Rather, it existed as an hour of pure entertainment that could evoke multiple emotional and intellectual responses from its audience without ever having a definite meaning. However, the claim that the programme was only ‘pure entertainment’ and outside ideology can be easily countered by an analysis of some of the cultural and economic influences on the show.

The riddles of *The Prisoner* stayed unanswered, but letters from the viewers about the last episode demonstrate how many in the audience were intrigued and able to appreciate the creativity that made it such compulsive viewing:

...I found it frightening, sometimes amusing, sometimes infuriating and *always* disturbing. I’m not much the wiser after the final episode – there seemed to be half a dozen ideas struggling to come across to the viewer, but none quite succeeded. But even if the experiment did not succeed (and I’m sorry it’s ended) I’d like to see more series or plays of this quality instead of the mediocre series which are thrust at the viewing public ad infinitum.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Dave Rogers, *The Prisoner and Danger Man* (London: Boxtree, 1989), p. 139.

<sup>565</sup> Miss G. Richman, ‘Viewerpoint’, *TV Times* (Southern), 17 – 23 February 1968, p. 16.

On the other hand, other viewers were clearly baffled by the lack of a logical story  
'The final "thrilling" episode I watched in disbelief. Trying to find some semblance  
of a story underneath...Am I a little dim?!!!'<sup>566</sup>

## **Conclusion:**

### **Celluloid Canons on Television**

John Ellis has explained that 'Every age has its own canon of great texts and one criterion for inclusion in any canon of classics is simply that a text should be amendable to use beyond the confines of the historical context in which it was generated.'<sup>567</sup> However, a series' worth needs to be historically contextualised first before considering its legacy. The selection of a canon has been problematic for television but a canon can be attractive because it concentrates on specific texts as a method of discriminating between the materials that exist in the television flow. However, as we have seen, rather than the flow of episodes in an adventure series, it was possible to disrupt audience expectation. In this way, television programmes can often resist an immanent reading and this is because of their eclecticism and the method of their consumption. To analyse the full range of television's cultural meanings, by intriguing its audience, it is necessary to understand that viewers watch more than one television series during a day or weekly, and can appreciate continuity and variation within the repeated schedule.

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<sup>566</sup> Mrs Patricia M. Range, 'Viewerpoint', 17 – 23 February 1968. It is also interesting that the female salutations indicate that a viewer's reaction to *The Prisoner* depended on their age or, perhaps, also their class. The first letter is written from Streatham, the other from Clapham.

<sup>567</sup> John Ellis, 'Is It Possible to Construct a Canon of Television Programmes?', in Helen Wheatley (ed), *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 15-26 (p.25).

Certainly, many meanings in 'classic' TV shows appear to be fluid so that, for example, while a 1960s series like *The Avengers* is celebrated by a modern audience for its 'camp' value and 'pop' strategy, this thesis has shown that a mass audience at the time would have been prepared to accept Steed and Emma Peel's antics within the conventions of a standard adventure series and within a realistic aesthetic.<sup>568</sup>

Nevertheless, when it was first shown the fourth series was also understood to be 'with-it' because of its pre-publicity. The change in attitude to television programmes as only being 'popular' or 'serious' can be regarded to have depended on a 'mutual analysis' between the producers of the show and the audience of the shows. In this way, the definite meanings of the series and genre within a programme have to be balanced against more distinctive features of character and tone that were important in the British action-adventure series. Overall, this can mean a semiotic density in an action-adventure telefilm that defies a singular generic categorisation but implies a high degree of organisation.

This is important because, as has already been noted, the adventure series can be made to fit easily into generalised claims about programme material. Primarily, it belonged to a corporate culture to produce generic filmed entertainment which repeats the standard narrative that ITV increased the amount of popular and light entertainment features on British television. This is true, but ignores some of the subtleties and complexities of shows such as *Danger Man*, *The Avengers* and *The*

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<sup>568</sup> Toby Miller, *The Avengers*, (London: British Film Institute, 1997), pp. 145-159. Miller discusses the growth of fandom for popular TV shows like *The Avengers* and offers an insight into the world of the fan and their sometimes obsessive desires. However, George Melly's discussion of 'camp' demonstrates that to the initiated it was apparent not only later, but at the time of the original broadcasting of *The Avengers*. See George Melly, *Revolt into Style: the Pop Arts in Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), pp. 172-174.

*Prisoner*, which meant that they were able to be different from imported American shows. As we have seen, the adventure genre of the 1960s does not always fit into wider institutional histories as being only popular and formulaic.

## 5. The 1970s Adventure Series: Realism and Action

### Introduction:

The previous chapter analysed some of the discourses within a programme's production and how these were negotiated. This final chapter interviews some of those involved in the production of shows from Thames Television and Euston Films in the 1970s. It is interested, in ways similar to chapters three and four, in how a series was produced and the process of production. Moreover, the use of case studies can, as in chapter four, attempt to complicate or problematise the dominant epistemologies about the industrial and social practices of television. For example, Chapman argues that the decline of the British adventure series in the early 1970s was economic and cultural and he cites the rising cost of television production as the main economic reason why such shows could no longer be produced.<sup>569</sup> However, the rising cost of television was partly ameliorated by the use of location filming on 16mm and by 'cutting corners'. The setting up of Thames Television International further indicates the continued importance of exports. After the failure of ITC to continue to sell its action-adventure series to the US, there is a claim by Chapman that British television ceased to produce adventure shows that represented a glamorous and trendy modern style.<sup>570</sup> Yet, as we will see, the gritty realism of shows such as *Special Branch* was not always as hard-edged as might be expected and could incorporate a variety of different styles that evidence a gradual and continuous

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<sup>569</sup> James Chapman, *Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p.244.

<sup>570</sup> Chapman, *Saints and Avengers*, p. 244.

development rather than an abrupt discontinuity between shows of the 1960s and 1970s.

Finally, this chapter will demonstrate how authorship in television can be used as a method of renewing the discussion about the role of creativity in television, which, because of its fragmented and fluid form, makes it difficult to find a system of classification. The lack of a unified form in *Special Branch* and *Hazell* illustrates the complex phenomenology of television, but also how the institution and those involved in the production sought to bring markers of authorship - interpretive consistency and cultural value - to extend the notion of textual function. For example, the initial planning of *Hazell* would find its sources in film and seek cultural values from Hollywood cinema, but these were opposed by other values taken from 16mm film as intrinsically more valuable than a television studio production.

### **ABC-TV and Thames Television: Continuities and Tensions**

Thames Television was set up in 1968 to broadcast to London during the week. The ITA thought that Rediffusion, which had held the permit for weekly broadcasting to London, to be efficient, but complacent and stale. It was decided that ABC Television, part of the Associated British Cinema empire, was bright, brash and deserved something more attractive than the North/Midlands franchise. ABC-TV had been the smallest of the 'big four' ITV companies – the others being ATV, Granada and Rediffusion - and had been given a franchise that had been perceived to be more of a hindrance than a positive advantage, broadcasting in the Midlands on only two

days. The desire for a better franchise had existed from the onset of broadcasting in 1956.<sup>571</sup>

In early 1967, ABC-TV had three of the most watched programmes in the top ten, which was remarkable for a broadcaster that was only on air for two days in the Midlands area.<sup>572</sup> It was the company's best rating performance since it had gone on air in 1956.<sup>573</sup> *The Avengers* took fifth position – a record for a British film series shown on the ITV network at different times during the week.<sup>574</sup> The company's contribution to drama overall was considered to be the most consistent over a long period. Already Howard Thomas had striven to demonstrate that ABC-TV had the potential for a bigger contract because it had the staff, the executives (men like Brian Tesler and Lloyd Shirley), the programmes, including *The Avengers*, and the studios at Teddington in south west London which had 'become the most advanced television engineering centre in Britain outside the BBC.'<sup>575</sup> In order to win a better franchise, ABC-TV had decided to invest in state of the art television engineering. It had a large research department at Teddington Studios, headed by Bernard Greenhead who had come from EMI and been instrumental in the building of the Alpha Studios in Birmingham that were jointly owned and used by ATV and ABC. 'The experiments

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<sup>571</sup> Ted Childs mentions that in his opinion this was felt by many at ABC to be a franchise hardly worth having, author's interview, 7 April 2011. The ABC-TV franchise meant that they broadcast to the North-West and the Midlands during the weekend.

<sup>572</sup> Tony Gruner, 'ABC – Five in Top Twenty – Ready for London Move?', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 February 1967, p. 23. The shows were *The Avengers*, *Life with Cooper* and *Doddy's Music Box*.

<sup>573</sup> Gruner, 'ABC – Five in Top Twenty – Ready For London Move?', p. 23.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

<sup>575</sup> Howard Thomas, *With an Independent Air: Encounters during a Lifetime of Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 199.

with colour in the studio had given the staff exceptional experience, well in advance of the Government giving the signal for ITV...to transmit colour'.<sup>576</sup>

One of the most important stimuli to TV filmed production in Britain had been, since 1964, the Exchequer Levy on ITV contractors' profits. Under the Television Act, 1964, the first version of the levy on advertising revenue was introduced. However, certain expenses could be set against the Levy and one of these had been the cost of programmes whose earnings from overseas sales were themselves from the Levy, as a contribution to the national export drive. This meant at times up to two-thirds of the cost of a filmed drama or 'television feature' could be deducted from the companies' Levy payment.

It would seem that this, more than anything else, was the reason for the rash of film production subsidiaries being created by the major ITV companies during the 70s. ITC and Thames' Euston Films have been the most active and successful, though both producing mainly series-drama; while Southern Television's Southern Pictures, ATV's Black Lion, and Granada and STV off-shoots have all experimented with full-scale British TV movies, destined for television only in Britain, yet available for theatrical release, as well as television, abroad.<sup>577</sup>

However, when it started, Thames did not have the programmes it wanted for export. ABC's *The Avengers* had ceased production in 1968 and Global Television Services, the overseas arm of Rediffusion, had not been successful at selling programmes to the US. When ABC-TV had lost the London franchise to the London Television Consortium, it had disposed of all its assets, including the rights to all 161 episodes of

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<sup>576</sup> ABC (Corporate author) *Colour: a Report from ABC Television* (London, November 1966). No publisher is cited. The first four-tube (colour) Mark VII camera from Marconi – described as one of the lightest and smallest colour cameras at the time – was first used at Teddington.

<sup>577</sup> Ian Christie, 'A Beginner's Guide to the Telefilm Jungle', in Jayne Pilling and Kingsley Canham (eds), *The Screen on the Tube: Filmed TV Drama* (Norwich: Cinema City, 1983), pp. 10-11 (p. 10).



*The Avengers*.<sup>578</sup> Moreover, the cost of film production for television was becoming prohibitive. By 1968, a one hour colour episode had cost £50,000. ABC-TV had been driven to ask for higher prices for its programmes, but outside America, a sale to the Commonwealth countries of Canada and Australia would only be expected to bring in a maximum of £5,000.<sup>579</sup>

During the formation of Thames in 1968 between ABC-TV and Rediffusion, there was an impression that the press had been underwhelmed by the list of new programmes going into production. 'To be completely objective, the feeling was that Thames had not offered anything really new in concept, though there were interesting changes in the form of some of the programming ideas'.<sup>580</sup> One of these ideas had been *Frontier*, a videotaped drama about the role of the British Army in India. Criticised for having an old-fashioned, imperialist viewpoint, and recalling the nostalgia of the past, it had been billed as the most expensive series ever made.<sup>581</sup> However, by shooting it on video it was unlikely to have had much success abroad because of the problems of copying the black and white 405 line videotape standard to film for the international market. Thames was losing interest in developing popular series drama that could be filmed and exported, and was investing more in light entertainment that could be shown at home. For the press at the time, Thames' most interesting plans were not in drama but special shows featuring entertainment stars such as Tommy Cooper, Max Bygraves and a pilot half hour show with the Goons.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> John Porter, 'The Avengers', *Starburst*, vol.6, no.6, February 1994, p. 38-42 (p. 38).

<sup>579</sup> Tony Gruner, '£5,000 Shock for ITV Companies?', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 January 1968, p. 14.

<sup>580</sup> Tony Gruner, 'Thames Tackles the Comedy Hurdle', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 May 1968, p. 18.

<sup>581</sup> Tony Gruner, 'Thames Turns to the Past for Its Drama', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 July 1968, p. 15.

<sup>582</sup> Tony Gruner, 'Thames Tackles the Comedy Hurdle', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 May 1968, p. 18.

J. A. Muir Sutherland had come from obscurity to the top production post in ITV as Thames' production director in 1982. He had first joined Border Television in 1963 before becoming the Head of Programme Planning and Presentation at ABC-TV in 1965.<sup>583</sup> In June 1982, he achieved his ambition and became Thames' Director of Programmes, although a London newspaper had derided his appointment and 'had referred to him as Mr Henderson'.<sup>584</sup> Sutherland may not have made any programmes, but he had been successful selling them overseas.

His personal recollection of the formation of Thames was that it was less of a merger than a new company with a new policy. 'The London franchise was important and an expansion of what ABC did...we saw what ATV had done. When Thames started it was with the idea of an international company before it got the licence, it was part of its future.'<sup>585</sup> It is not too much to claim that some executives at Thames had ambitions of becoming Britain's principal television programme exporter at this formative stage, but as Sutherland suggests, 'when thinking about projects, there was a little bit of thought, this will make some money abroad, but we were making programmes for people in Britain...However, people at ATV we knew very well.'<sup>586</sup> Indeed, Sutherland had been Chairman of the various Network Committees in his area of scheduling and programme planning, and would have had the opportunity to observe closely the programmes from ATV and the other main ITV rivals.<sup>587</sup>

Soon programme makers, including Lloyd Shirley, one of the founders of Euston Films, Thames' film-making subsidiary, were to accompany Sutherland to

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<sup>583</sup> Anon, 'The Way Ahead', *Studio*, Spring 1983, pp. 18-19 (p. 18).

<sup>584</sup> William Phillips, 'Is There Media Life after Benny Hill?', *Televisual*, January 1984, p. 23.

<sup>585</sup> Muir Sutherland, author's interview, 28 January 2011.

<sup>586</sup> Sutherland, author's interview.

<sup>587</sup> Anon, 'The Way Ahead', *Studio*, Spring 1983, p. 18-19 (p.18).

Cannes for the International Television Festival. Beginning in 1963, Cannes was a major annual event for Thames, held in the Palais des Festivals, to meet potential international programme buyers. 'Lloyd Shirley in Drama always came to Cannes and was selling things alongside me and my colleagues...[he] came to Cannes and went into detail on the programmes that were in the process of being sold...We wanted our programmes in there rather than Granada's programmes,' explains Sutherland.<sup>588</sup>

Two things emerge from this. First, whatever hopes for overseas sales Thames had, it was a process that was beginning from scratch. Sutherland is insistent that ABC-TV sales abroad were too insignificant to have been a base to build on in spite of the success of *The Avengers*. He believed that its success, which was remarkable, has been used to distract from the failure to sell other programmes. Secondly, there was not a clear division between the management and the programme makers, the former seeking overseas sales and programmes shot on 35mm, and the latter interested in shows that were British and shot on 16mm or inside the television studio, which conformed to a distinctive domestic television aesthetic. A misleading impression can be gained from reading contemporary articles criticising the telefilm as too 'transatlantic'.<sup>589</sup> Rather than a desire to produce programmes either for an overseas or domestic market (or both) within the television companies such as Thames there was a more mundane desire to see the company grow and prosper, continued employment, and a realisation that bigger projects were only possible if the money could be secured by selling abroad.

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<sup>588</sup> Sutherland, author's interview.

<sup>589</sup> See the review of *Special Branch* by George Melly on pp. 281-282 of this chapter.

It was against this gradualist approach - which did not demand that programme makers be demarcated to produce 'transatlantic' entertainment in the way that ITC previously had – that, as Sutherland explains about the beginning of Thames Television International (TTI), 'Everything came together: it was not a case of someone saying you have to do this'.<sup>590</sup> Consequently, the decision to set up TTI cannot be attributed directly to a single individual, as in the case of ITC and Lew Grade, but a collective feeling within the company that the programmes that Thames was producing by the early 1970s would justify the setting-up of a new overseas sales subsidiary. Thames' overseas arm was set up in 1974. The business arrangements of TTI were originally established by Sutherland and by the end of the 1970s overseas sales had become big business. When he left, it would have a turnover of £12 million and TTI's annual November screenings at Thames' North London studios had been established as one of the major international video marketplaces.<sup>591</sup> TTI's advertising slogan became 'Made in Britain. With Care'.<sup>592</sup> Despite the use of 16mm film and an insistence to deploy indigenous film forms that we saw in chapter three, the 1970s, as much as the 1960s, was a decade that was aware of making programmes for overseas markets as a method of supporting future domestic production.

### ***The Protectors (1972-74)***

Thames Television, formed in 1968, did not adopt and develop the slickly produced action-adventure series in the 1970s which its predecessor company, ABC-TV, with

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<sup>590</sup> Sutherland, author's interview.

<sup>591</sup> Anon, 'Sutherland's Law', p. 20.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid., p.20. However, Sutherland in author's interview claims that he never heard the phrase being used.

the example of *The Avengers*, had managed to do a few years earlier. *The Avengers* had been a British modification of the US telefilm adventure series; the type of modification that, because of the Pilkington Report and the service ethic on British television generally, Cathy Johnson has labelled, 'serious entertainment' in her analysis of *The Prisoner*.<sup>593</sup> Instead, Thames emphasised its other ABC inheritance – naturalistic drama in the form of the studio based *Armchair Theatre* – and had given action-adventure a strong London lowlife flavour. Its film subsidiary, Euston Films, went on to produce programmes such as *Special Branch*.

This was a departure from the international espionage chic of *The Saint* or a fantastic detective series such as *The Avengers*, but it would be a mistake to argue that the programmes by Euston Films represented a complete break from the earlier adventure series of the 1960s. The ITC series, *The Baron*, scripted by Terry Nation, made at the height of 'Swinging Britain', had prefigured in small ways the 'gritty' realism of the 1970s. Although little more than an imitation of *The Saint* (despite the importation of an American star), unlike *The Saint*, the hero did not go in for womanising and lacked the repartee that had been de rigueur in British adventure thrillers since *Bulldog Drummond*:

*The Baron* was a much more serious proposition. The shows had no straight-to-camera introduction and tended to end abruptly on the denouement...on occasion those adventures could be very dark. The last episode of the series, 'Countdown', featured a fine array of evocative settings – a scrap yard, railway sidings...as the backdrops to five unpleasant deaths, including a man kicked out of a railway compartment in front of an oncoming train...and a third being tortured with a lit cigarette before being crushed under a concrete block...the killings...look[ed] forward to

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<sup>593</sup> Cathy Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), p. 42.

the violent British gangster films (*Performance*, *Get Carter*, *Villain*)...<sup>594</sup>

*The Protectors* (1972-74) was produced by ITC after production of *The Persuaders* (1971) had ended, and starred Robert Vaughn who had played Napoleon Solo in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964-68). However, in comparison to the slick persona he had adopted for Napoleon Solo in *The Protectors*, Harry Rule lacked the flirtatiousness with woman his predecessor had used. In the early 1970s, the super-spy that Roger Moore had portrayed in *The Saint* in the previous decade was replaced by a more non-romantic resilient image that made the adventure detective Harry Rule strikingly different from Napoleon Solo. Although Vaughn himself says, 'I didn't see Harry Rule as anything other than a variation of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*'s Napoleon Solo' there was an attempt to offer a more mature representation of the adventure hero as opposed to the optimistic 1960s fantasy.<sup>595</sup>

Many of the episodes of *The Protectors* favoured psychological realism to the point where there is, in fact, an excessive psychological examination of protagonists in the episodes *For the Rest of Your Natural...* and *The First Circle*.<sup>596</sup>

Simultaneously, the first series continued to use the standard tropes of the adventure series so that high living continues to be visible as Nyree Dawn Porter plays the beautiful and wealthy Contessa di Contini (Caroline) in Rome and other cities. But the series also probes Harry Rule in his frequent moments of stress and unhappiness that reflected the actor's own inner turmoil. Vaughn was to say that, 'at that

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<sup>594</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *The Man Who Invented the Daleks: the Strange Worlds of Terry Nation* (London: Aurum, 2011), pp. 129-130.

<sup>595</sup> Robert Sellers, *Cult TV: the Golden Age of ITC* (London: Plexus, 2006), p. 226.

<sup>596</sup> *The Protectors*, 'For the Rest of Your Natural...', originally transmitted, 5 January 1973 and 'The First Circle', originally transmitted, 23 March 1973.

particular time in my life, I was so terribly disenchanted with the events of the sixties in America. We had the murders of Dr. King and Robert Kennedy, and there was our continuing involvement in the Vietnam War, which I opposed publicly. So I saw this as a chance to continue to stay away from the United States, which I had...done since 1968, after the election of Richard Nixon.'<sup>597</sup> On the other hand, Vaughn also explains that '...I assumed...that they [the producers of *The Protectors*] would be able to comprehend that what they were doing was not *The Avengers*, and what I wanted them to do WAS *The Avengers* or something like that...what I wanted them to do...never happened.'<sup>598</sup>

The psychological realism of *The Rest of Your Natural...* is evident when Colin Grant, a murderer, is convicted on Caroline's evidence. He escapes and stages a mock trial with himself as prosecuting counsel in front of a jury of cut-out cardboard figures. Caroline is captured and terrorised by the psychopathic Grant as she realises that the death of his mother has unhinged his mind. The contrast between the high-living Contessa, who is initially seen in Harry Rule's fashionable south Kensington flat, and the psychopathic Grant lends a tension-laden dynamic to the episode. At the same time Grant, in his lower middle-class home, appears to be more of a character out of shows made by Thames TV such as *Callan* (1967 – 1972), signifying further the transition from the stylish adventure series to its partial replacement with notions of psychological realism.

Although Euston Films would later set a trend to shoot entirely outside the studio, most of *The Rest of Your Natural...* is shot inside a studio mock-up of a living

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<sup>597</sup> Sellers, *Cult TV*, p. 225.

<sup>598</sup> John B. Murray, *Robert Vaughn: a Critical Study* (London: Thessaly Press, 1987), p. 112.

room that appears seedy and claustrophobic. Instead of shooting, in older episodes, in exotic places such as Rome, Venice, Barcelona, Salzburg, Copenhagen, Madrid and Paris, the show was attempting a new combination of the competing values of service and glossy entertainment. The initial ATV Press Release would announce that *The Protectors* was ‘filmed in breath-taking colour’ and used ‘lush, exciting locales’. It explained that ‘Every...swank London penthouse, or a bohemian pad in Hamburg or a fantastically lavish Italian villa...[is] filled with highly sophisticated, computerised miniaturised equipment...’<sup>599</sup> At the same time, the series would display ‘a cold tough unapproachability’ and ‘an understanding sensitivity’.<sup>600</sup> Here then was an indication of how the show hoped to combine spectacle and narrative, between spectatorial space and an interest in the social. However, as we have seen this was less of a break with earlier adventure series and more of a development that continued to exhibit a range of textual engagements with an audience who could appreciate narrative complexity.

The style of the *The Rest of Your Natural*... is eclectic, ranging from shots using a fish-eye lens that depict Grant’s disturbed mind and the intensity of emotion he feels towards the woman he murdered before cutting back to the stylish interior of Harry Rule’s flat as he paces the main room and stops in front of an exquisite *objet d’art*. Nyree Dawn Porter’s performance is also at odds with other episodes from the first series, such as *A Case for the Right*, when she demonstrates that she is a match for any man in combat.<sup>601</sup> Instead, she plays a defenceless victim who, rather than

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<sup>599</sup> ATV, Press Release for *The Protectors*, series 1, episodes 1-8, DVD Extras (Carlton Visual Entertainment, 2002)

<sup>600</sup> Murray, *Robert Vaughn*, p. 109.

<sup>601</sup> *The Protectors*, ‘A Case for the Right’, originally transmitted, 30 March 1973.



using her fists, has to overcome Grant by her feminine ability to empathise emotionally with him and win his trust. The downbeat conclusion ends by her freeing herself of Grant but not because of her own efforts. Grant has had a complete nervous breakdown and is reduced to a harmless heap on the floor. She meekly picks up the phone and asks for help. A complex approach to psychology, which would be considered to be old-fashioned today because of its over-reliance on gender stereotypes, is used to reveal extreme states of mind within a realistic style that illustrates the mundane as well as the horrific in this episode. However, this is not always entirely convincing next to expectations of commodified living and style in the show that had been established earlier in the series.

Many of the writers and actors (John Thaw, Patrick Mower) who would work later at Euston Films would do work on *The Protectors*. For example, Trevor Preston, who penned many episodes of *Callan* and *Special Branch*, wrote four episodes for the second series. These would carry the same concerns as seen in the *Rest of Your Natural....* Again, there is a familiar emphasis on psychology and seriousness at the expense of visual style and physical action. In *Burning Bush* the story is told fairly elliptically, focusing less on a linear plot than on psychology.<sup>602</sup> Harry Rule is assigned to find the missing daughter of a rich businessman, kidnapped by a religious cult and the episode relies on many close-up shots of the protagonists, as the audience is invited to interpret their different, complex motivations. In this way, shots provide for character familiarity, proximity and the exploration of the social. In *Quin*, also penned by Preston, Caroline is kidnapped and faces being killed by Harry Rule in

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<sup>602</sup> *The Protectors*, 'Burning Bush', originally transmitted, 18 January 1974.

order to protect his cover as a businessman.<sup>603</sup> Due to the confrontation with death, there is a moment of rupture with earlier expectations of the adventure series, even though both characters are saved at the last moment. Caroline has survived, but the trauma has permanently unhinged her and the show ends ambiguously, denying the full possibility of a happy ending.

Vaughn was indignant that the series made no sense because each week there would be 'chaotic plots' and 'five or six running characters in a twenty-two minute show'.<sup>604</sup> In the early 1970s, the accusation of British adventure thrillers being 'chaotic' and not knowing what they hoped to achieve was echoed again in comments about *Special Branch*, as we will see later. One explanation is that this was the result of contradictory values that British television and modes of shooting on 16mm had brought to drama. Consequently, marketing the series proved problematic because the original concept had been vague and, in its marketing, ITC struggled to explain what *The Protectors* was about:

The organisation exists to protect those in peril, its members being super-agents from the world's best detective agencies. Every Protector keeps in close communication with his colleagues so they can draw on the collective intelligence and skills of these international networks. It is a private organisation, unrestricted by the technicalities which so often hamper the law. Protectors can break through handicapping legal tape and international frontiers, their methods often being as unconventional as they are hazardous. Money is no object. The Protectors are expensive to hire and are called upon not only by private individuals but also by powerful groups. Those bodies employing them know they are hiring not only

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<sup>603</sup> *The Protectors*, 'Quin', originally transmitted, 21 September 1973.

<sup>604</sup> Murray, *Robert Vaughn*, p. 112.

individual and collective skills, but also the latest scientific devices...<sup>605</sup>

And so on. *The Protectors*, unlike its predecessors, was shot on 16mm and the image appears grainy compared to the glossiness of 35mm film used for earlier series such as *The Persuaders*. However, unlike the realism used by Euston Films at this point, none of the episodes in *The Protectors* self-consciously make use of the tropes by then associated with shooting with 16mm, although the opening of *With a Little Help from My Friends* shows Hannah Gordon being pursued through central London, and some attempt has been made to give it a verité style reminiscent of Euston's earliest productions.<sup>606</sup>

At the same time, other absolute certainties were being subverted. Britain's place in the world, which had been steadily eroded since the 'retreat of Empire' from 1957 to 1965, had undermined the gentleman adventurers and super spy conventions of the genre that had dominated the 1960s British television film serial. Second, the glossy, consumerist lifestyle of *The Saint* and *The Persuaders* may have remained visible in *The Protectors* but appeared awkwardly placed in a decade marred by IRA violence and economic upheaval in Britain, marking its shift from fantasy. Instead, it was the transmutation of the mundane, quotidian world into something more horrific that writers such as Trevor Preston would use not only in episodes of *The Protectors*, but in the new filmed series of *Special Branch*, which sought psychological realism. The use of unglamorous settings in both shows signalled the transition from a commodified fantasy to an aesthetic of gritty realism, but it would be wrong to say

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<sup>605</sup> Simon Archer and Marcus Hearn, *What Made Thunderbirds Go: the Authorised Biography of Gerry Anderson* (London: BBC Worldwide, 2002), pp. 203-204.

<sup>606</sup> *The Protectors*, 'With a Little Help from My Friends', originally transmitted, 23 February 1973.

that the use of glamorous people stopped and the commodified values they represented disappeared entirely from British screens.

### **Thames' Relationship to Euston Films**

With the merger of ABC-TV and Rediffusion into Thames, other players appeared in the history of using 16mm film for drama, such as Lloyd Shirley, who became Controller of Drama at Thames, and George Taylor who became Head of Film Facilities. Significantly, Lloyd Shirley and George Taylor both had a background in factual television and experience of 16mm film location shooting.<sup>607</sup> Similarly, Mike Hodges, who had been working on ABC-TV's arts programme, *Tempo*, had also experience of shooting documentary on 16mm on Granada's *World in Action*.<sup>608</sup> He had made several documentaries for *Tempo* including profiles of some leading film directors of the time, shot in the style of their subject.<sup>609</sup> His work at *Tempo* brought him to the notice of Shirley and he was asked to write and direct *Suspect* – part of *ITV Playhouse*.

Ted Childs has mentioned that Hodges was able to 'con' Lloyd Shirley into letting him shoot on 16mm and the implication is that Shirley shared a common

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<sup>607</sup> Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made For Television: Euston Films Limited* (London: British Film Institute in association with Thames Television International, 1985), p. 31.

<sup>608</sup> Edward Buscombe (ed.), British Film Institute Dossier 9: *Granada: the First 25 Years* (London: British Film Institute, 1981), pp. 89-116.

<sup>609</sup> *Tempo* had approached the Royal College of Art in 1963 and asked the students within the RCA film school if they would be interested in writing and directing a programme for the show. The result was *Medium Sized Cage* made by Trevor Preston which was a meditation on the relationship between the bedsitting room and the television. Subsequent work on *Tempo* was again documentary-based, though sometimes of a highly unusual nature, rather than being fictional. The main importance of *Tempo* to Euston Films in the early 1970s was that it had demonstrated the possibility of a small production team, outside the main structure of ABC's studio production, which would work together developing television's use of 16mm film. See Trevor Preston, 'The Medium Size Cage', *Opinion: Art and Television*, undated.

<<http://discreet-uk.com/state-of-art/ISSUE%20NINE/preston-9.html>> [accessed January 2011].

prejudice at the time that drama could not or should not be shot on 16mm film.<sup>610</sup>

Nevertheless, Hodges was able to shoot on 16mm and '[*Suspect* could] have been the first all-shot 16mm film drama production shown on ITV'.<sup>611</sup> Shirley was so pleased with the result that he commissioned a second drama, *Rumour*, which was broadcast on 2 March 1970, but which deployed much more of a *nouvelle vague* than a straightforward *verité* style, with its slow motion, jump cuts and sardonic voiceover to capture the cynicism of the new decade and the impending crisis of sleaze and corruption at Scotland Yard.<sup>612</sup>

The success of *Suspect* and *Rumour* would eventually lead to the idea of a subsidiary producing TV films and, because 'The BBC after ATV was the biggest exporter of programmes at the time, Lloyd Shirley wanted to make films that could compete with the BBC which he highly regarded'.<sup>613</sup> The idea of a film subsidiary (Euston Films) was not new because ITC had been doing this since 1955, but another ITC was not envisaged. Lloyd Shirley was to explain:

...the only really all-film series being done in the UK were through Lew Grade's subsidiary company, ITC, and although this was perfectly honourable stuff, most of it was done in conjunction with the Americans and therefore had a kind of attitude of mind, a kind of mid-Atlantic feel about it, the best of it being *Danger Man* and *The Prisoner*...we didn't want to do that...because...should we try and duplicate the work of somebody else?<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>610</sup> Ted Childs insists that Lloyd Shirley at this stage did not have any plans to make film drama on 16mm and Mike Hodges must be given full credit for its use. Author's interview, 7 April 2011. This contradicts the view expressed by Alvarado and Stewart, p. 31.

<sup>611</sup> Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, p. 31.

<sup>612</sup> A 1969 investigation by *The Times* had uncovered (with tape recordings to corroborate the story) three separate detectives taking bribes from a professional criminal in return for dropping charges. See Alwyn W. Turner, *Britain in the 1970s* (London: Aurum, 2009), p. 61.

<sup>613</sup> Muir Sutherland, author's interview, 28 January 2011. Shirley appears to have had a colonial's exaggerated respect for major British institutions.

<sup>614</sup> Lloyd Shirley quoted in Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, p. 32.

However, this attitude can be read as disingenuous; Thames was not in a position in the 1970s to compete with ITC. Their situations were too different. The uninterested owners of Thames depended too much on the revenues raised by the company to support their own failing economic operations and were reluctant to invest revenue into bigger projects.<sup>615</sup> Until 1980, the owners' policy was to extract Thames' after-tax earnings, and the company throughout the mid to late 1970s had virtually no cash reserves. Its balance sheet showed that by March 1979, shareholders funds of £13.87 million stood against deferred tax and creditors of £14.09 million and debts of £12.70 million, up by two-thirds in a year.<sup>616</sup> Overseas sales would have to assume a disproportionate importance as the company's revenues shrank compared to debt and the company struggled in the early 1980s to adapt to the threat of Channel 4, domestic video, and, on the horizon, new technologies such as satellite. The lack of interest in the possibilities of developing television as screen entertainment in the 1970s can be sharply contrasted to the situation at ATV, which, by the early 1960s, had diversified into a fifty percent interest in Pye Records, and British Relay Wireless, as well as gaining full control of the Independent Television Corporation of America (ITC).<sup>617</sup>

Nevertheless, Lloyd Shirley had wanted to make drama films especially for TV for some time because of the economic benefits. The novelty was that there was to be no studio filming and freelance labour was to be used. This suited Thames

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<sup>615</sup> William Phillips, 'Thames TV's Shotgun Legacy', *Televisual*, December 1983, p. 22.

<sup>616</sup> Phillips, 'Thames TV's Shotgun Legacy', p. 22.

<sup>617</sup> ATV, 'Our North American Venture', *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1961, p. 11.

because, with the arrival of extended hours and afternoon programming in 1972, it had run out of studio space at Teddington anyway.<sup>618</sup>

The Euston Films subsidiary was originally to make ninety-minute films that were essentially television plays with a bit of action, for a series called embryonically *Armchair Cinema*. These included *Regan*, which would become the pilot episode of *The Sweeney*.<sup>619</sup> However, the challenge of shooting on location might have been seen as daunting even by producers of film-for-cinema because of the vagaries of the British weather and the problems of obtaining the necessary permissions for shooting in a small, densely populated country. No one had ever tried to deal with the English climate on a regular basis without recourse to a studio. It was, therefore, realised that it was necessary to minimise the risks involved. Donald Cullimore explained what Euston had done: 'we have chosen a good, straightforward, almost safe formula for the series [*Special Branch*] but we have to find out the teething troubles around shooting a TV drama series wholly on location.'<sup>620</sup> In this venture, the studios at Thames, which were becoming increasingly equipped with expensive electronic hardware, had become the site for producing entertainment, and gritty drama would be shot on location on film.

### **Thames Television, Euston Films and the Television *Auteur***

In Britain, in the field of drama, it was the writer who was most likely to be seen as the originator of the play/programme. However, in *The Prisoner* authorship was contested at various times between the star of the show, Patrick McGoochan, the

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<sup>618</sup> Anon, 'A 60 Minute Movie Made on Location Every Ten Days', *Broadcast*, April 13 1973, p. 14.

<sup>619</sup> *Armchair Cinema*, 'Regan', originally transmitted, 4 June 1974.

<sup>620</sup> Anon, 'A 60 Minute Movie Made on Location Every Ten Days', p. 14.

television mogul, Lew Grade, and the story editor, George Markstein, among others. Equally, in the fourth series of *The Avengers*, authorship can be attributed to Julian Wintle or Brian Clemens, but there is evidence that there were two spheres of action; the first centred on the script and the second on the design of the studio sets, although the script remained primary and adumbrates Clemens being dropped, albeit temporarily, from the sixth series. Nevertheless, if we add other determinants such as the lighting by Alan Hume cited in chapter three, the extent to which the end production was the result of a single operation by one individual makes the term authorship scarcely adequate.

The use of authorship as a theory of cultural production is further compromised by the fact that it is being applied to not only an industrial medium such as television, but also to an industrialising process including the phenomenon of ‘flow’. Yet, as we have seen in chapter two, the service ethic on British television and its response to ‘flow’ is complicated and can mean that television has also been a medium of cultural *and* popular expression. This emerges clearly during the convergence of early television and the ‘B’ movie to produce the British telefilm and the opening up of alternative modes to the studio produced drama, as we have seen in respect to the adventure series.

In the Annan Report, published in 1977, Anthony Smith, in his appendix made the argument that the producer in television was the author.

It is fundamentally the producer who exercises the “freedom” which the broadcasting organisation has (or has not) secured for itself, and it is only the individual producer working on an actual programme who can judge whether the regulatory systems within which he is operating are



helping or hindering; frequently they do both simultaneously. The student of broadcasting systems quickly discovers that there is no concept more intractable than “creative freedom”.<sup>621</sup>

However, Edward Buscombe argues that Smith’s use of ‘creative’ is less concerned with defining authorship than making a distinction between different grades of workers within television.<sup>622</sup> Smith recognises three kinds of workers: creative, industrial and managerial. Industrial workers are understood by Smith to be those who perform a function similar to other industries, for example, electricians. Managerial workers are similar to managers in other industries. Creative workers are writers, directors, script editors and probably the ‘stars’ of the show.<sup>623</sup> However, there is another group that Smith does not mention. These were the camera operators, editors, lighting directors, production designers. It was these staff at Thames Television that the analysis of *Hazell* in chapter three was concerned with. An exploration of *Special Branch* and *Hazell* offers a clearer idea of television authorship, its effect on the adventure series, and the industrialising process on producers such as Verity Lambert and directors such as Jim Goddard.

Practitioners can avoid some of the constraints of working within an institution or the television studio, but the idea that creativity lies solely with the producer, director or writer ignores that a negotiated and collective authorship is an unavoidable reality in determining television. This is important in understanding the development of television fictional genres. What an examination of authorship can

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<sup>621</sup> A. D. Smith, ‘The Relationship of Management with Creative Staff’, *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting* (London: HMSO, 1977), pp. 129-168 (p. 129).

<sup>622</sup> Edward Buscombe, ‘Creativity in Television’, *Screen Education*, no.35, Summer 1980, pp. 5-17.

<sup>623</sup> Trevor Preston argues that from the 1970s, television became a ‘star’ medium. He cites the example of John Thaw in *The Sweeney* and by extrapolation the same argument could be made for Patrick Mower in *Special Branch* or Nicholas Ball in *Hazell*. Author’s interview, 15 February 2011.

reveal is how the practice of generic criticism is more than a reading of iconographic content (*mise-en-scène*), but can locate the development of the genre at the deeper structural level of ideology. This can be done by shifting the focus of attention from the iconographic to the narrative and this is the approach that Steve Neale has elaborated with an argument which is premised on a notion of narrative as a 'process of transformation of the balance of elements that constitute its pretext'.<sup>624</sup> Neale goes on to explain that '...signifiers articulated in a narrative process [are] simultaneously that of the inscription of a number of discourses, and that of the modification, restructuration and transformation that each undergo as a result of their interaction.'<sup>625</sup> For Neale, the presentation of elements and the relations of coherence, compatibility and contradiction within the narrative are examples of the development of a genre. An examination of television authorship at Euston Films can reveal how narrative was affected by authorship which either reinforced a dominant ideology or was able to resist the industrial norms of television of the time and its values. As we have seen, this can be linked back to the idea that besides the use of genre, industrial practices, such as television scheduling, requires programmes to be the same but different.

Jim Goddard, a 'jobbing' director for Euston Films in the 1970s, has described the difference between directing for television in the electronic studio in the 1960s and early 1970s and filming for Euston.

A lot of television was shot like a closed fist to avoid interfering producers. If there was a lot of interference we used a lot of close-ups for that reason. Television was stylistically restraining. The technical requirements and restrictions of early television were almost crippling. But

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<sup>624</sup> Steve Neale, *Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), p. 20.

<sup>625</sup> Neale, *Genre*, p. 20.

Euston offered not only a technical freedom but a freedom of thought... We wanted to find the truth in the story...<sup>626</sup>

Goddard goes further and believes that because ‘the film camera had been invented by the artist, and the television camera by the technician,’<sup>627</sup> it was necessary to start using film to escape the limitations of a studio production:

At Euston there was a lack of management on your back. Verity [Lambert] was a very good producer. If things were going all right she’d let you go and run with it. On the other hand, if I knew how I was going to do it, I’d be a hack. I have to respond to what’s happening... Producers should watch it [the programme] as a television audience rather than eight people in a studio asking why he’s doing that, when he’s going to do this... The way I’m going to direct is the sum total of my life... Television has the wrong sort of control. Television people tended to criticise the creative process rather than the end product because it is under their auspices, in their studios. When you’re in film, the producer looks at the rushes at the end of the day, he says that doesn’t work, change it. Film allows the director to have the authority to maintain the style of the show.<sup>628</sup>

If nothing else, and certainly the idea that the film camera was invented by an artist will be problematic, Goddard offers the idea that the director aspires for ‘control’, but that this is contested in an industrial medium, in which there will be control by management in addition to technical constraints and the scope offered by the space itself. The level of ‘trust’ the producer has in the director is a key factor in later assigning authorship to a particular programme. A jobbing director suggests a journeyman status; in other words, the director will work at the level of a skilled craftsman, rather than an artist. However, Goddard’s career demonstrates that he was keen to find the ‘truth’ in a story if the project was of sufficient seriousness. For him,

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<sup>626</sup> Jim Goddard, author’s interview, 20 January 2011.

<sup>627</sup> Goddard, author’s interview.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

paraphrasing his favourite impressionist painter Henri Matisse, exactitude was not truth, but still he worked to represent ‘the atmosphere or feel of a place and took away that which is not necessary. Exclusion from the frame is very important’, he explains in a question regarding his own television style while shooting for Euston.<sup>629</sup> It was this sensibility that led Verity Lambert, the Head of Euston Films from 1976, to employ him to make some of the company’s most interesting programmes as the decade progressed.<sup>630</sup>

When asked about the competence of the staff at Teddington, Trevor Preston, a writer for some of the episodes of *Special Branch* and *Hazell*, makes it clear that Euston Films was able to employ technicians that were more skilful than those working at Teddington. To work on film was always understood to be more prestigious because it might mean the possibility of later working on feature films. Preston makes the point several times that in his opinion the most creative people happened to be those who were watching films and wanted to work on film.<sup>631</sup> They might be thought to be ‘accidental’ television makers whose true home was in a film industry that was no longer able to employ them. However, Preston is careful to acknowledge that at Euston some of the directors were also ‘journeymen’. ‘They just did it and went home. I had a bit more fire in my belly than they did...When I worked for Jim [Goddard] he could talk about the writing and I could talk about the direction’.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> *Out* (1978) and *Fox* (1980)

<sup>631</sup> Trevor Preston, author’s interview, 15 February 2011.

<sup>632</sup> Preston, author’s interview.

For the initial filmed series of *Special Branch*, Lloyd Shirley and George Taylor believed that it was vital to allow a director to be the ‘author’ of each episode. This was to avoid what they believed was a ‘processed’ element in American film series that arose because control for the final look of the production would be the responsibility of the supervising editor and production manager.

We wanted to avoid this at all costs because it seemed to me that you don’t get the best you can for the viewer by engaging a talented director just by putting such strictures around the way they work...we worked on a technique where the director would come in, do his recce [reconnaissance], do his shoot, then do his own cut. ITC kind of accepted directors, without encouraging them; the Americans went even further than that, making it clear that the director’s cut was of little interest to them.<sup>633</sup>

Nevertheless, the idea of a personal authorship at Euston Films has to be measured. Stephen Pushkin, a first assistant director at Euston, has explained that ‘directors were on a loop – Mike Vardy, Jim Goddard, and never got off it’.<sup>634</sup> Alistair Reid and Jim Goddard were regarded as ‘action’ directors, although Goddard didn’t see himself as that kind of specialist. Goddard had been a painter who had trained at the Royal College of Art and was concerned about colours and visual patterning on the sets – a director who might be expected to be interested in the visual style of a programme.<sup>635</sup> However, he was labelled an action director because he had worked on *The Sweeney* after working on *Special Branch*. On the other hand, Alistair

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<sup>633</sup> Lloyd Shirley quoted in Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made For Television: Euston Films Limited* (London: British Film Institute in association with Thames Television International, 1985), p.45.

<sup>634</sup> Stephen Pushkin, author’s interview, 19 January 2011.

<sup>635</sup> One of his earliest commissions had been as a set designer on *The Avengers* episode, *Brief for Murder*, originally transmitted, 28 September 1963.

Reid, a director on *Hazell*, considered himself to be a specialist drama director for television, but was confronted by the problems of working in the studio.

Although Lew Grade had enjoyed success in selling to the three US networks in the 1960s, this was to prove short-lived and there is a risk of over-estimating his achievement – a tiny fraction of British shows ever found favour in the US compared to the total amount produced in both countries. Later, outside of its film subsidiary, Thames did produce period drama in the 1970s for the overseas market. However, because of the need to provide work at Teddington, they were recorded on videotape which was disliked by the US networks. Most of Thames' costume productions were consequently broadcast *ad hoc* on Mobil's PBS *Masterpiece Theatre*.<sup>636</sup> Thames produced a good deal of lavish period drama, from *Napoleon and Love* (1974) to *Edward and Mrs Simpson* (1978), but, transmitting in the US on the Public Broadcasting Service, they were paid a fraction of what the networks would have paid. However, this situation changed from the mid to late 1970s because of the gradual aligning of domestic programming and overseas sales helped by Thames Television International and the option of shooting on film, including on 16mm.

We have seen that Euston Films chose to follow in the *Armchair Theatre* tradition established by ABC-TV and not try to emulate ABC's telefilm tradition in *The Avengers*, but this was as much out of necessity as from design: it did not have the funding to make programmes for the American networks. Dennis Spooner, the originator of ITC series such as *Jason King*, explains that:

...ITC stopped making those type of adventure series after *The Protectors* because, I think, inflation had caught up

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<sup>636</sup> Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, pp. 13-14.

with the cost of production and the revenue that comes back from television is limited. The return from a television show is governed by what the various countries are prepared to pay. You can say you'll get back £6 million from a television series and that's fine if it costs you £3 million. But if it costs you £4 million and then £5 million and you're still only getting £6 million back, then you start dropping shows and suddenly you're investing but you haven't got the bonanza.<sup>637</sup>

When asked whether Euston Films had been conceived as a 'loss leader', that is, not expected to make money but good for Thames' reputation as a serious producer of cutting-edge drama after a shaky beginning, Jim Goddard agreed:

Euston was a loss leader but we had been talking about it some years before. You see television had grown out of a visual medium in America but by the late 1960s we were doing better TV than the Americans. In the late 1960s, Mike Hodges and I had sat in a house in Kensington to brainstorm arts programmes on 16mm [for the arts programme *Tempo*]. We wanted to make arts shows that were broader than that and so it continued when we came to make *Callan*. *Special Branch* [the first videotaped series] had no exterior scenes. They wouldn't do exteriors in *Callan* and did them in the studio because they were expensive to do outside. The collaboration on a new film unit offered freedom of space on 16mm film.<sup>638</sup>

Euston's shows may have been shot on film and used locations, but it was acknowledged that their dialogue and dialect – often working-class London - made them difficult to understand in the US and disqualified them from sales to the US networks. 'An American audience would have needed subtitles'.<sup>639</sup> Moreover, Thames programming chief, Jeremy Isaacs, had a background in current affairs and not entertainment. It was only after Isaacs' departure in 1978 and his replacement by

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<sup>637</sup> John Fleming, 'A Starburst Interview: Dennis Spooner', *Starburst*, vol.4, no.9, May 1982, pp. 47-50 (p. 48).

<sup>638</sup> Jim Goddard, author's interview, 20 January 2011.

<sup>639</sup> William Philips, 'Is There Media Life after Benny Hill?', *Televisual*, January 1984, p. 23.

Bryan Cowgill<sup>640</sup> from the BBC and, eventually, by Sutherland in 1982, that Euston Films was at last fully encouraged to make filmed drama with much more obvious export potential. *Reilly – Ace of Spies* (1983) was the result of the renewed interest, after the relative hiatus of the early to mid 1970s, in creating filmed drama that could capitalise on international sales to the US.

If the liberation from the TV studio and the freedom to frame and light television as a film was to lead to more expensive drama chasing the funding necessary to compete with US imports, it could also count on other types of ‘production values’. If production values can be understood to include ‘story value’, a measure of good writing could maintain its integrity in the series format and still have mass appeal for an audience. This method of competing with the US was a hybrid between expensive production values including money spent on the sets, expensive location shooting, and the realism characteristic of British television drama that remained, argued Goddard, ‘subservient to the idea you’re trying to express... You are creating an illusion that reminds you of the experience and not the experience itself.’

Throughout the 1970s, a commingling of forces - economic, political and technical - helped to make Euston almost as much a unique institution within British television as ITC had been in the 1960s. First, the shows produced by Euston Films would be sold abroad, but their primary function was to serve a peak-time British television audience and conform to particular notions of ‘quality’ in terms of writing and acting whose origins can be found in the intimate drama television of the 1950s.

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<sup>640</sup> Bryan Cowgill was Controller of BBC One from 1974-77.



Second, some of its writers such as Trevor Preston and Troy Kennedy Martin, in the 1960s, had been interested in developing a television aesthetic that could transcend the limits of naturalism, and ‘expand’ reality. Third, Chris Burt, the supervising editor on Euston’s first film series, *Special Branch*, noted that television-oriented people were quicker and more used to cutting corners.<sup>641</sup> However, this was precisely the approach required for making programmes cheaply enough on 16mm film in an era of high inflation, which could be exported to US independent stations and the rest of the world where they enjoyed considerable success.<sup>642</sup>

Fourth and finally, the domestic market thrived on the idea of a ‘closed shop’ with protected pay deals and conditions. Roger Gimbel, the head of EMI in the 1970s, complained, ‘there’s no competition in Europe. Even at the BBC, these guys get fat deals. We’ve asked quite a few people to come and work here [the US west coast] – and they’re not interested...The only independent sector Britain [has] is an expatriate colony in Hollywood. Or else, a Hollywood colony in Britain – just like the British film industry in fact. And we all know what happened to that.’<sup>643</sup> Ironically, it could have been the failure of the indigenous film industry that helps to explain why talented production staff preferred to stay in Britain to work in television rather than take the risk in Hollywood.

Prior to the setting up of a fourth channel in 1982 and the fostering of an independent production sector, companies like Euston Films functioned to produce

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<sup>641</sup> See chapter 3, p. 169.

<sup>642</sup> From 6 to 10 September 1976, Thames worked with the independent TV channel WOR-TV, Channel 9 in New York, to provide programmes, presenters and commercial breaks in the British style. Thames paid WOR-TV a fixed fee for its air-time and intended it to be an occasion to showcase a typical week of British television. See Anon, ‘The Medium’, *Broadcast*, 22 March 1976, p. 3.

<sup>643</sup> Roger Gimbel quoted in Sue Summers, ‘The Americanisation of EMI’, *Broadcast*, 16 January 1978, p. 9.

television that continued to be popular with a peak-time audience, but offered an alternative to the studio bound and often heavily protected British television industry of the 1970s. The directors brought in by Euston felt that they were making something worthwhile and Euston Films found that they could attract good directors:

When people were hired they felt that they were to have artistic control over the production...That was totally different from the other forms of making series at the time. All the other series were made almost on a factory basis where the director had little power and little say in what was done: he would shoot the schedule and [go onto another project].<sup>644</sup>

Although directors would come and go at Euston Films, and nearly everyone was engaged on a freelance basis, a number of people who had worked on the first Euston series of *Special Branch* became Euston regulars. One was Chris Burt who worked his way up from supervising editor on *Special Branch* to producer of *Reilly – Ace of Spies*, Euston's most expensive and ambitious project. It was the making of *Special Branch* in 1973-74 that marked the beginning of a 'stable' or 'family' of writers, directors and technicians who became the 'authors' of many of Euston's productions of the 1970s.

### ***Special Branch* (1969-74): Realism and 'Watchability'**

When called to judge what the original videotaped series of the studio-bound *Special Branch* (1969-70) had had to offer, many contemporary critics were dismissive, believing it to be simple fare. Reviewing the show, George Melly mentioned that:

*Special Branch* tries hard to escape the restrictions of the potentially exportable series. If it fails it's because perhaps

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<sup>644</sup> Chris Burt quoted in Alvarado and Stewart, *Made for Television*, p. 47.

there is no escape. America is the big market...In the end total nonsense like *Counterstrike* [BBC1] is more acceptable because it makes no effort and offers nothing beyond a straight if diluted imitation of *The Avengers* grafted into science fiction. At least it achieves some style.<sup>645</sup>

The invoking of *The Avengers*, which had only recently disappeared from the screen, is interesting because it suggests the influence that it continued to exercise on the mind of the critic asked to evaluate another ‘adventure’ show.

For many critics there was a more familiar trope by which to judge the value of a programme: how the ‘realism’ of the original studio-bound *Special Branch* (1969-70) had dealt with psychological depth. As Stewart Lane wrote, ‘*Public Eye* [1965-75] had a quality of realism, a level of penetration and character in a class of its own and centred on one man.’<sup>646</sup> *Public Eye* was about a down-at-heel private investigator. In 1965, the publicity material for the show from ABC-TV had described him as ‘no elegant figure with a dashing sports car, a pretty secretary and a handsome young assistant, but a thin, shabby, middle-aged man...’<sup>647</sup> The exterior location shooting for both shows had been on 16mm film and the interiors had been videotaped in the television studio, but for Lane realism depended on content rather than the medium that had been used to record any part of the programme: ‘*Special Branch* has, one supposes, some kind of realism but the observations are diffused over

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<sup>645</sup> George Melly, Untitled, *The Observer*, 9 November 1969, page unknown. (From various cuttings on microfiche held at the British Film Institute library. All other contemporary reviews of *Special Branch* from British newspapers have come from the same microfiche source at the BFI).

<sup>646</sup> Roger Marshal wrote several episodes of *The Avengers* before becoming disinclined to work with Brian Clemens and the formula he was using for writing *The Avengers*. He next wrote the original six episodes of *Public Eye*.

<sup>647</sup> Anon, ‘The World of Frank Marker’, 1965, unpaginated. Original publicity material (PDF) to accompany the show on DVD *Public Eye* (Network, 2005).

several characters.’<sup>648</sup> The series had begun with a warning that the plots were fictional and not based on actual files. However, as the first television series on the work of Scotland Yard’s Special Branch, its quality ultimately would rest on the way the story outlines would be chosen. ‘For the most part they are taken from newspaper clippings and old cases as Scotland Yard made no material available to Thames who produced the programme.’<sup>649</sup> But despite these claims the uncertainty about the realism of the studio drama continued to affect its status when it went to film in 1973.

One critic pointed out that *Special Branch* aspired to the psychological penetration or social relevance of the BBC and worked because it vigorously prosecuted, with due attention, narrative vivacity and local colour.<sup>650</sup> But it was the lack of realism compared to that which had existed in *Callan* and, earlier in *Z-Cars*, that was acknowledged by Elizabeth Cowley writing in *The Sun*.<sup>651</sup> A BBC series like *Z-Cars* and *Softly, Softly* (1966-69) had grown from a documentary tradition. However, the vogue for spy stories and the ‘big business’ series on TV in shows such as ATV’s *The Power Game* (1965-69) had marked another new fashion to satisfy the fickle television audience, she believed. According to Cowley, *Special Branch* had become as far from documentary reality as *Fabian of the Yard*, although *Special Branch* had been put together with Simenon-like efficiency. This confirmed her newspaper’s belief that *Special Branch* was a perfect example of the world-wide

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<sup>648</sup> Stewart Lane, Untitled, *Morning Star*, 20 September 1969, page unknown.

<sup>649</sup> Peter Knight, ‘*Special Branch*, TV Writer’s Nightmare’, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 August 1970, page unknown.

<sup>650</sup> Maurice Wiggin, Untitled, *Sunday Times*, 27 September 1970, page unknown.

<sup>651</sup> Elizabeth Cowley, ‘Such a Talky Tale of a Spy’, *The Sun*, 12 August 1970, page unknown.

tendency of television entertainment to grow simultaneously more ‘costly and sillier’.<sup>652</sup>

By the early 1970s, a vogue for realism re-emerged in the action-adventure genre, except it was of the ‘gritty’ variety. This gritty realism appealed to younger audiences and was different from the sometimes staid, middle-class, and middle-brow entertainment of the first series of *Special Branch*.<sup>653</sup> ‘ITV, in particular, not only bought many American “tough-action” imports, but also developed a home-grown version of the genre with *Special Branch*...’<sup>654</sup> The third (filmed) series of *Special Branch*, produced by Euston Films in 1973, would herald this new use of realist aesthetics. However, this extra realism has to be measured because it was to be heavily criticised by Troy Kennedy Martin in 1978:

It is difficult to imagine, with a war on in Ulster and the streets of London echoing to the sound of broken glass from Irish bombers, that anyone would develop a series which made not the slightest reference to the Branch’s primary purpose of existence...Patrick Mower ran through the series, gun in hand, finding strings of missing pearls in the more exotic parts of Kensington and dabbling in African power politics. It was a throw-back to the old Wolsey pictures with Mower’s depiction of the policeman – despite a contemporary toughness – essentially middle-class. The only interesting feature about *Special Branch* was that it produced many of the people who were subsequently to be deployed in *The Sweeney*. These included the director Tom Clegg and the producer Ted Childs.<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Cowley, ‘Such a Talky Tale of a Spy’.

<sup>653</sup> In part, an interest in gritty reality would have been due to the rise of violent youth sub-groups. See Alwyn W. Turner, *Britain in the 1970s* (London: Aurum, 2009), p. 63.

<sup>654</sup> Bill Osgerby, Anna Gough-Yates and Marianne Wells, ‘The Business of Action’, in Bill Osgerby and Anna Gough-Yates (eds), *Action TV: Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 13- 31 (p. 22).

<sup>655</sup> Troy Kennedy Martin, ‘What’s Happened to Heroes? 25 Years of the British Police Series’, *Four of a Kind? – Crimewriters, National Film Theatre Programme Notes*, BBC, 1978, p.130.

*Special Branch* marks in many ways a convergence of two generic strands – the 1960s spy-adventure show based on conspicuous consumption and the 1970s ‘Law and Order’ show in which hard men take extreme action to protect the ‘national’ interest. By the 1970s the British crime show was taking a more action-oriented direction and moving away from the world of *Dixon of Dock Green* (1955-76) and the social conscience of *Z-Cars* to the need for taking action because of escalating crime and the necessity of making a tough response. *Special Branch* prefigured some of the concerns of *The Sweeney*, a crime thriller rather than an adventure thriller, although its use of spies and foreign diplomats in the ‘defence of the realm’ continues to mark many of the episodes as ‘sensational adventure’ with an escapist appeal.

Patrick Mower, as Detective Chief Inspector Tom Haggerty, embodied some of these tensions. He had been hired to improve what had been perceived as the show’s lacklustre appeal. ‘*Special Branch*...was a bit short on the magic. No hocus-pocus here. No sleight of hand. Little juggling with ideas.’<sup>656</sup> However unglamorous Mower may have appeared within the press release for *Special Branch* (1974), he had been cast for the initial filmed series because of his sex appeal after starring in *Emmerdale Farm*.<sup>657</sup> It should also be remembered that the original studio-bound series of *Special Branch* not only starred Derren Nesbitt, another pin-up actor of the time, but was the first programme to show policemen as trendy dressers.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Mary Malone, ‘Sorry It Just Won’t Wash’, *Daily Mirror*, 5 April 1973, page unknown.

<sup>657</sup> Two articles exist in the *TV Times* preparing the audience for the new filmed series of *Special Branch*. The first mainly factual account occupied one eighth of the page. The second article which followed it the following week was on Mower’s sex appeal and occupied an entire page under the general heading, ‘Stay Young with the Stars’. See Ken Roche, ‘They All Want to Share My Husband’, *TV Times* 7-13 April, 1973, p. 24.

<sup>658</sup> Hilary Kingsley and Geoff Tibballs, *Box of Delights: The Golden Years of Television* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 106.

Nesbitt would have long hair and a carefully uninhibited girlfriend; another convention not entirely dropped in the new filmed series. Mower had also played the sadistic James Cross in *Callan* the year before, but it was not his acting abilities that the *TV Times* celebrated in April 1973, on the eve of appearing for the first time in the episode, *Round the Clock*.<sup>659</sup> Instead, the emphasis was on the fact that *Callan* had made Mower a sex symbol; his sadistic image but good looks had earned him an influx of lusty fan mail - a marker of his popularity.<sup>660</sup> The casting of Haggerty suggests that, without a significant female character in the show, the producers were looking to widen the appeal of a tough adventure series for women.

The inclusion of a man of action and the appeal to women had been used to some degree as an added attraction since Roger Moore in *The Saint* and his 'chocolate box charm'. However, Haggerty had little of the upper-class detective adventurer about him or the 'Carnaby Street masculinity' associated with Jason King in *Department S* and his own eponymous show.<sup>661</sup> *Special Branch* signalled that quirkiness and the cerebral appeal of an earlier generation of detectives, men like King who knew how to cook as well as to fight, had been replaced by the soon to become popular 'laddish' masculinity found in shows such as *The Professionals* (1978-83). Like Bodie and Doyle in *The Professionals*, Mower was able to offer a more action-orientated and, arguably, more chauvinistic direction for the British adventure show, but in *Special Branch* there was less a move away than might be expected from the certainties of 'good taste' that had existed when violence was only permissible if identified with conventional heroics. The urban jungle of *The Sweeney*

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<sup>659</sup> *Special Branch*, 'Round the Clock', originally transmitted, 11 April 1973.

<sup>660</sup> Ken Roche, 'They All Want to Share My Husband', *TV Times*, 7-13 April 1973, p. 24.

<sup>661</sup> *Department S* was broadcast from 1969-1970, and its sequel, *Jason King*, broadcast from 1971-72.

did not appear yet in *Special Branch*, although one of the final episodes, *Intercept*, by Ian Kennedy Martin, which is discussed later, has many more obvious parallels with *The Sweeney*.

In *Special Branch*, Mower is paired with George Sewell playing Chief Detective Inspector Alan Craven. Craven exists as a source of narrative legitimacy; he is an authority figure who embodies some of the heroics of earlier Scotland Yard detectives. His grittiness is seen to serve his professionalism as a policeman and Mower and Sewell do not form a prime-time buddy relationship as would appear in *The Professionals*. Instead, he provided a foil to Haggerty's disturbing, if engaging, masculinity. In *Round the Clock*, for example, Mower offers banter about a woman they are keeping under surveillance. Sewell mentions that she could be smuggling gold in a specially designed corset. Mower watching her through powerful binoculars remarks 'she doesn't wear corsets'; his professionalism becomes problematic as the episode seeks to represent the need to put public good above personal desire. Mower later tells Sewell to 'cut the moral lectures', which is followed by Sewell visiting his girlfriend, a good-looking, young black woman. However, Sewell's dedication to his duty, the ability to put public good above personal desire, interferes with his ability to enjoy a 'normal' relationship with her, much to her frustration; a theme used again in *Double Exposure*, explored later.

Originally, although the police women in the show were unglamorous, Sewell would get a girlfriend. She was played by Sheila Scott-Wilkinson, an American, who appeared regularly in the programme.<sup>662</sup> Contrary to the idea that the series was only

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<sup>662</sup> Anon, 'On Location with *Special Branch*', *TV Times*, 31 March – 6 April 1973, p. 5.



made for a domestic audience, exported programmes stood a better chance in the US market with an American star or foreign star that had become ‘Americanised’ such as Peter Finch or Trevor Howard. But in the absence of these, ‘a black leading lady was thought to do no harm at all to the programme’s export chances in the United States where Thames had great hopes for it’.<sup>663</sup>

Serious drama and documentaries that purported to mirror ‘real’ life existed on British television, but the adventure series had been firmly inside the realm of generic entertainment where the rules and expectations of ordinary life did not apply. These mixed cultural values were to lie at the heart of the development of *Special Branch* from its inception in 1969 as a studio drama to the much grittier final filmed series in 1973-74 and help to explain the difficulty of finding a satisfactory and unified aesthetic in it for both its programme-makers and critics alike. The reaction of much of the press, especially to the 1973 series of *Special Branch*, can help to explain the devising of *The Sweeney* two years later in which Ian Kennedy Martin was to play a significant role. ‘There must be some special jinx which hangs over the commercial television channel and inhibits it from producing a really authentic police series,’ one critic had claimed earlier.<sup>664</sup> The desire by many critics was for a series that could faithfully reproduce the gritty reality of police work rather than the escapism of the adventure series. ‘Mind you, *Special Branch* has at least learned its kerb drill. Entering pubs, boarding buses, taking taxis...There they are hard at it...’<sup>665</sup> This ‘kerb drill’ was one of many action codes that would be successfully deployed in *The*

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<sup>663</sup> Shaun Usher, Untitled, *Daily Mail*, 2 March 1973, page unknown. Sheila Scott-Wilkinson was an American, living in Britain.

<sup>664</sup> Richard Last, ‘Police Series Doesn’t Inspire Belief’, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 April 1973.

<sup>665</sup> Mary Malone, ‘Sorry, It Just Won’t Wash’, *Daily Mirror*, 5 April 1973, page unknown.

*Sweeney* a year later. Certainly *Special Branch* was sold on the basis of an unexpected immediacy and naturalistic authenticity that had not hitherto existed in an adventure series. The *TV Times* made clear what the appeal of the new filmed series would be:

Not one studio corner had been furnished, not one studio light switched on. The stupendous millionaire's habitat seen later in the series, complete with waterfall and two sauna baths, stands solidly in North London. A disused prep school for boys, St. Pauls, has been cast as an annexe for some of the *Special Branch* departments and a launderette plays a launderette.<sup>666</sup>

The *Special Branch* press release for the fourth series 'from Thames Television of Great Britain' offered on the front a black and white profile photo of Alan Craven, the main character, played by the actor, George Sewell, who is dressed in casual clothes and not at all policeman-like. Sewell had already appeared in Granada's *Spindoe* on ITV in 1968, as a 'tough' private detective.<sup>667</sup> The brochure contained only black and white photos – at odds with a colour series. At the same time, Patrick Mower as Tom Haggerty was unusually unglamorous, and all shots, usually designed to signify action, were profile or one quarter shots.

The mixing of codes associated with the crime genre and the adventure genre would continue: 'A new filmed drama series in colour from Thames, Britain's biggest independent producer of TV programs', explained the brochure: 'Not the kind of cop who chases robbers and killers and frauds. But one who keeps a cool eye on a nation's internal security. A special kind of cop who works for a special kind of

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<sup>666</sup> Anon, 'On Location with *Special Branch*', *TV Times*, 31 March – 6 April 1973, p. 5.

<sup>667</sup> *Spindoe* has been described as being 'one of the toughest vidseries ever to be aired by the commercial set'. See Ian Greaves, 'Programme Notes for Big Breadwinner Hog', DVD *Big Breadwinner Hog* (Network, 2007), p. 12.

department in Scotland Yard's least publicised branch. Most people know its name. But few know fully what it stands for.' Here we have older notions of 'defending the realm' against alien threats. At the bottom was a picture of a march, it looked peaceful enough but the placards being carried declared 'Smash Bosses', 'Stop Napalm'.

Nevertheless, one comment that is usually repeated by practitioners who worked on the show was that *Special Branch* was a failure because it did not know what it wanted to be, and yet this, furthermore, reveals television's need for categorisation. Trevor Preston, one of the show's writers, queried what it was about: a policeman investigating a crime, or was it about counter espionage spies?<sup>668</sup> In the end, no one quite knew. The critics of the time were inclined to agree with him:

...[the] format of the show seems to indicate a definite retrogressive stage in the development of the police series as a genre. An early show like *Fabian of the Yard* did not seek documentary accuracy. It wanted to be plausible, of course, but at the same time to allow the chief character access to as many melodramatic and exciting situations as possible. In consequence, his actual job was never clearly defined...<sup>669</sup>

Those masters of the 1960s adventure series, Robert Baker and Monty Berman, had claimed that nothing should be unclear to the television audience because there were too many distractions: meals, other members of the family wanting another programme, visitors, the phone.<sup>670</sup> In *Special Branch* there was an underlying tension from the beginning between its generic boundaries as a stylised piece of fiction that could have provided values of clear comprehension and

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<sup>668</sup> Trevor Preston, author's interview, 15 February 2011.

<sup>669</sup> Keith Dewhurst, 'Special Branch', *The Guardian*, 12 August 1970, page unknown.

<sup>670</sup> Tony Gruner, 'Baker and Berman's Saint Goes Marching On – And On', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 August 1964, p. 15.

verisimilitude for a distracted audience, in much the same way Baker and Berman's *Saint* had done, and the show's 'naturalistic' qualities, that demanded a more complex narrative and greater audience attention:

We do step quite a few rungs up the ladder with Thames Television's *Special Branch*. This is aimed towards the *Power Game* [1965-69] target though it hasn't hit it yet. The various officers in the branch are nicely differentiated but they haven't yet developed quite enough idiosyncratic personality to come sparklingly alive. The cases they investigate are not merely possible but they are probable. But by pursuing two within each episode, the author, George Markstein, hasn't given himself enough room to develop quite enough tension over them. But the series has promise.<sup>671</sup>

It was not the watchability of the show as a stylish distraction, which had existed at the height of the 1960s, but the quality of the scripts that was thought to be the most important characteristic of any successful series. This, in some ways, had marked more of a break between a show such as *Callan* and earlier adventure shows. Yet, more often than not, *Special Branch* was compared to *Callan*. George Markstein, the experienced script/story editor of *Danger Man* and *The Prisoner*, had been employed on the videotaped *Special Branch* after leaving *The Prisoner* because he had believed that his ideas had been hijacked by Patrick McGoochan.<sup>672</sup> Markstein had next worked as a script editor for the first series of *Special Branch* before working on the third and fourth series of Thames' other espionage thriller, *Callan*. It was *Callan*, more than any other programme, which exerted an influence on the narrative codes, if not the style, present in *Special Branch*, particularly in the final two (filmed) 1973-74 series.

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<sup>671</sup> T.C. Wolsley, Untitled, *Financial Times*, 1 October 1969, page unknown.

<sup>672</sup> Chris Rodley, 'Degree Absolute', *Primetime*, vol.1, no.3, March-May 1982, pp. 14- 18 (p. 16).

The idea for a discredited Cold War agent whom nobody cared for had stemmed from an *Armchair Theatre* play, *A Magnum for Schneider*, produced in 1967. *Callan* was the antithesis of James Bond and follows in the non-sensationalist tradition of espionage that had been made popular by Le Carré in the 1960s. He was constantly on edge and talked in cryptic phrases; but he was ruthlessly efficient, and, if necessary, brutal. If Bond was surrounded by conspicuous consumption and beautiful women, Callan's only acquaintance was an unwashed burglar called Lonely who, when nervous, 'stank like a skunk'.<sup>673</sup> The 44 episodes made a star of its lead actor, Edward Woodward, and at the end of the 1970 series, when *Callan* slumped to the floor, Thames TV had been flooded with calls asking whether he was dead and would he return.<sup>674</sup> It was not until 1972 that *Callan* returned with Patrick Mower as his mean partner Cross, in line with its new regular weekly night slot, a year before Mower was to star in *Special Branch*.

George Markstein has been described as a 'quintessential apparatchik'.<sup>675</sup> He was not a man of action, but a thinker. He had worked in military intelligence and as a crime reporter. Markstein made it clear that he liked to be recognised as the story editor and not the script editor. The story editor was the author of the episodes of a series or 'the man who creates and thinks up stories'.<sup>676</sup> But one problem for a man like Markstein was how to write the character of Lonely, a south London thief, in

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<sup>673</sup> Hilary Kingsley and Geoff Tibballs, *Box of Delights: The Golden Years of Television* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 94

<sup>674</sup> Kingsley and Tibballs, *Box of Delights*, p.94.

<sup>675</sup> Ian Rakoff, *Inside The Prisoner: Radical Television and Film in the 1960s* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1998), p. 54

<sup>676</sup> See Chris Rodley, 'Interview with George Markstein' <<http://www.the-prisoner-6.freemove.co.uk/markstein.htm>> [accessed January 2011]. Markstein is suggesting the difference is between being either a creative author, who embodies expressive autonomy, or a wordsmith.

*Callan*. Lonely was a working class character and Trevor Preston, who had been born and raised in Battersea, south London, was selected to help write his character.

Preston believes that he was the only working-class man on the set.<sup>677</sup> His intention was therefore to make the series ‘real’ by offering an authentic representation of class that had hitherto been missing from an adventure series, but more obvious in a crime series such as *Z-Cars*.

Lonely had been a snivelling, south London thief and Russell Hunter, the actor who had played the part of Lonely, found him becoming more authentic as Preston took over the writing of the character. His character was to be pushed into new places and he became the second star of the series. However, there were limits to the show’s realism. Preston recounts how he wrote a scene to go into the episode, *Summoned to Appear*.<sup>678</sup> Lonely would be in a seedy backstreet hotel in Paddington. The phone would ring and he would answer, ‘No, I didn’t order the Jewish Chronicle’. The line was removed for being possibly anti-Semitic because the owners of the small hotels surrounding Paddington Station in London at the time, Preston claims, formed a Jewish enclave. However, he argues that it would have been enormously funny to the people who were familiar with the same shabby world that Lonely inhabited. In these small ways, television remained a middle-class discourse that was conscious of ‘good taste’. It had a sense of what its audience wanted that was restricted in some areas in order to avoid giving offence, but could, at other times, be widened or expanded and made to be more ‘realistic’.

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<sup>677</sup> Author’s interview, 15 February 2011. Preston makes the point that he found it humorous that Kennedy Martin and others writing for *The Sweeney* had to consult a rhyming slang dictionary because the working-class idioms chosen for the series were unknown to such middle-class men.

<sup>678</sup> *Callan*, ‘Summoned to Appear’, originally transmitted 15 April 1970.

### ***Special Branch* (1973-74): Hybridised Values**

The episodes *Inquisition* and *All the King's Men*<sup>679</sup> from the third (filmed) series of *Special Branch* demonstrate the tensions and relations of coherence, compatibility and contradiction within the genre at the time as it switched from the constraints of the studio to location filming. Both episodes were scripted by Trevor Preston and share a common concern to reveal the psychological depth of the characters. However, *Inquisition* is a reminder of the intimate style of the studio drama; it conforms to Huw Wheldon's admonition that 'limitation is the friend to style'.<sup>680</sup> Rather than expressive imagery, the story concerns the interrogation of Yearsley, a neat and inoffensive looking man, who after nearly losing a foot at Suez has been left to survive on his meagre army pension. Yearsley remarks that without Suez he would have been a colonel by now, married, with a family, respectable. Instead, he has left prison and is accused of being implicated in a conspiracy involving the blackmail of a businessman who has committed suicide. The rest of the episode consists mostly of a stripped down image consisting of the 'talking heads' that, for Alan Parker (chapter three), was to make television aesthetically limited. In the same way as *Callan*, the episode shows 'a human being under pressure...always on the limit of his nerves, because that is what television does best: to see how individuals act under pressure.'<sup>681</sup> The gritty reality that would be the main aesthetic of *Special Branch* did not always rely simply on a 'real space' and observational detail, but also on the

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<sup>679</sup> *Special Branch*, 'Inquisition', originally transmitted, 18 April 1973 and 'All the King's Men', 23 May 1973.

<sup>680</sup> See chapter 3, p.152.

<sup>681</sup> John Kershaw, the story editor of *Callan*, quoted in Andrew Pixley, 'Callan A Blueprint for Quality', *Primetime*, no.12, Spring/Summer 1987, pp. 27-29 (p. 27).

claustrophobic feel of the tight framing of shots and the monotony of the repeated close-up avoiding any sense of a 'real' space. Yearsley discusses the period of his life spent in prison with its the slow movement of time, and the audience becomes conscious not only of a sense of imprisonment during the interrogation, but the foreshadowing of his inevitable return there. In fact, after a bitter psychological struggle with his interrogators, he commits suicide to avoid returning to jail.

A later episode, *All the King's Men*, attempted to avoid the hierarchy between script and image found in *Inquisition* and offered a technical quality that incorporated the look of the film for popular drama on television as well as something more ambitious. An epic scale is evoked in the use of shots in the opening: first there is a long panoramic shot along the Thames in central London that stops on a tall building; then a cut to a matching fluid camera movement inside the building that descends different levels to reveal the interior; then a cut to a close-up and an inquisitively mobile camera that follows an electrical cable to a bomb and a radiating series of cables from the main bomb to more bombs in the building. The camera never ceases to move until it alights on the creator of the bombs in long shot and cuts to a close-up of him. Even now, it continues to move by panning around, finally stopping to form his POV of the hostage he has taken. A huge amount of information is elicited without dialogue using fast-pace editing rather than a dialogue-based show. This forms an exciting teaser sequence before the main titles. The teaser sequence is similar to other television dramas and their use of mini cliff-hangers, but the provocative opening suggests a more authorial and creative use of the camera.

At the same time, the use of a spectatorial space does not limit the narrative: the increased capacity for a physical space permits a more documentary use of the camera at particular moments. The use of locations to create a sense of realism was to



be used in most episodes, but in *All the King's Men*, editing is avoided in favour of the long-take when uniformed police officers arrive at the building and the camera uses zooms rather than cutting to a new set-up to try and capture an authentic 'event' unfolding unscripted in front of our eyes. Director Dennis Vance, an ex-Head of Drama at ABC-TV, was able once more to bring an approach to filming for television that combined immediacy, spontaneity, as well as an epic scale.

This more authorial use of the camera was integrated into a narrative that sought to engage with the early 1970s as a period of general disenchantment with politics and a desire by many to find radical solutions to the problems besetting western societies. Consequently, one of the key characters in *All the King's Men* is Sheila Fenner, a black activist on trial for her campaign for civil rights. Geoffrey Bayldon plays Douglas Sumner, a man who has been radicalised by the failure of conventional politics – 'I have opted-out and become a casualty of the system', he mutters – and who has become a home-made terrorist, using the threat of bombing London to free Fenner.

Unlike the studio-bound *Callan*, there is not a clear opposition between the stylishness of the production and the psychological depth of the story. Even some of the thematic range noticed in *The Prisoner* reoccurs; the same fear of machines and a burgeoning technocracy that limits and threatens human freedom – Bayldon plays a computer expert. As we have seen in chapter four, an attempt at dealing with political and social concerns was not always played down in favour of glamorous designs, surfaces and life-styles in the 1960s. But in *All the King's Men* there is an almost quotidian exploration of the psychology of the bomber, a conventional man and faithful employee of his company, nevertheless who has become radicalised. However, one example of what might be a 'tonal variation' or generic hybridity in

episodes of *Special Branch* is the oscillation between action and a subtle deepening of the character so that, after threatening to blow up the building, Bayldon asks for cigarettes from his hostage and promises to pay for them, absurdly displaying a bourgeois regard for scrupulous honesty.

It was against this background, in which the stylised action of the adventure series was being gradually replaced by the notion of a renewed realism shot on 16mm, that the final (1974) series of *Special Branch* would be shot. The tropes of 16mm film began to mark a shift from the well-dressed policemen of the earlier series and the programme became the progenitor of the gritty realism that Euston would eventually become famed for in its next programme, the hit show *The Sweeney*. However, *Special Branch*, at least in its earliest episodes, marks more of a ‘direct cinema’ tradition than is obvious in *The Sweeney*.

The show’s press release invoked older adventure series, but explained how it would be different from them:

The aim [of the show] is a hard authenticity, with believable characters in realistic situations, filmed entirely on location against real London backgrounds that few foreign tourists get to see. The men are not secret agents. They’re not licensed to kill. They don’t even carry guns without good reason. But they face dangerous situations as a matter of daily routine. They’re ordinary cops, with at least two years’ patrolling behind them. That’s what makes them unique in the field of undercover operations. And it’s what makes *Special Branch* a unique film series.<sup>682</sup>

Again, we have the claim of ‘unique’ television, but, as we have seen, the many links to earlier shows affected its generic status. Nevertheless, the characters were ordinary

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<sup>682</sup> Thames Television (Corporate author), *Special Branch* press release, 1974. (Accessed at the British Film Institute).

coppers, and, initially, appear to embrace the ‘New Drama’ that Troy Kennedy Martin had asked for by freeing the camera from photographing dialogue. Television requires ‘a working philosophy which contains a new idea of form...Something which can be applied to mass audience viewing,’ Kennedy Martin had explained.<sup>683</sup> In this way, the ‘authentic’ characters of Haggerty and Craven can be contrasted with Simon Templar, the international playboy character of a previous adventure series. Nevertheless, the casting of Patrick Mower suggests a linking back to representations of suave masculinity that had existed earlier. Moreover, in the main, the realism of *Special Branch* avoided the stylistic and formal experimentation called for by Kennedy Martin.

*Double Exposure*, the opening episode of the final series, was reminiscent of the paranoid thrillers released in the cinema at the time, including *The Parallax View* (1974); films mentioned by Trevor Preston as being watched by the writers and crew at Euston Films.<sup>684</sup> Already, the ‘direct cinema’ style found in *Rumour* and *Suspect*, directed by Mike Hodges, and its appearance in early episodes of the first series of *Special Branch*, was being replaced or made to work side-by-side with other styles. *Double Exposure*, directed by Don Leaver after directing many episodes of *The Protectors*, sees the main characters of Craven and Haggerty assigned to investigate whether a photographer is a threat to national security. Mostly filmed in the fashionable area of west London amid white stucco houses, the opening of the episode demonstrates that the ‘grittiness’ of *Special Branch* was not always as visible as its creators liked to have claimed. Unlike *The Sweeney*, the series sometimes lacked the

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<sup>683</sup> Troy Kennedy Martin, ‘Nats Go Home: First Statement of a New Drama for Television’, *Encore*, no.48 (March/April, 1964), pp. 21-33, (p.21).

<sup>684</sup> Trevor Preston, author’s interview, 15 February 2011.

‘local colour’ of the criminal underworld of London that, outside its fashionable centre, was neither a swinging nor a safe place to be - a point that had been made so well in *Callan*.<sup>685</sup> But in *Double Exposure* it continued to function as an up-market and ‘trendy’ milieu that was still recognisably ‘swinging’ in the early 1970s.

*Double Exposure* attempts to repeat a standard trope of both strands of the spy adventure genre of linking extreme and fantastic behaviour within a setting of normality. For example, in the opening shots of the episode, we are shown a wooden board that tells us the location: Merchant Guild School for Boys, followed by a shot of two school boys and the sound of a boy’s choir. The camera pans from the boys to a blackboard outside a building with closed doors that says ‘British Senior Schoolmasters Association. One Day Conference. Strictly Private. Members Only’. Inside the building, instead of a meeting of senior schoolmasters, the head of Britain’s Special Branch, played by Paul Eddington, is giving a seminar to the men of the service. The incongruity between what is being told to the audience through the *mise-en-scène* and what is, in fact, happening marks this moment in *Special Branch* as being every bit as mysterious and misleading as the teasers or tag scenes had been in *The Avengers* a few years earlier. The style of *Double Exposure* remains straightforwardly realistic, as the programme evolves into a treatment of the themes of technological voyeurism and irresponsibility. It would be too much to claim that *Double Exposure* was interested in this co-articulation because it was judging reality as elusive and unknowable, but it did make possible the idea, borrowed from the

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<sup>685</sup> See, for example, Preston’s episode for *Callan*, *Summoned to Appear*. Cross deliberately pushes a man to his death under a train and Callan has to lie against his conscience.

paranoid thrillers of the time, of a calm and stable appearance at odds with a mundane reality which, beneath the surface, was violent and conflicted.

Haggerty is ordered to befriend a photographer played by Stuart Wilson. The two protagonists are constantly played off against each other: both are 'action' men. There is also the suggestion of gracious living when they go water-skiing together. It is at this point that the style of the episode breaks from an earlier authenticity and, about half way through, fades into the look and style of an upmarket television advert.

Haggerty holds hands in the woods with the photographer's sexy assistant. Each moment of their walk through the woods is taken in long shot, connected by fades and not cuts. The camera makes use of plenty of dappled light on water and soft colours to represent their relaxed mood. The borrowing of the aesthetic of an up-market television advertisement shot on film is noticeable.<sup>686</sup> Television advertisements were mostly shot on film, preferring film lighting and a polished precision that is also deployed in this segment of *Double Exposure*. The production is technically perfect but aesthetically pleasing images have become the director's only achievement in this scene. Another possible source of inspiration for this use of style would be from another Hollywood film. The sequence is similar in many ways to the famous bicycle scene in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969). Both are shot without dialogue and there is non-diegetic music to create a romantic, carefree mood. At this moment, *Double Exposure* becomes the polished art of the advertisement without feeling or bite. The problems of filming a form and style, that Troy Kennedy

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<sup>686</sup> See chapter 3, pp.177-178.

Martin had argued should belong to the new kind of adventure appropriate to a 'violent decade', cannot be contained in *Double Exposure*.

We have seen how television had developed a sense of its (domestic) audience since the 1960s by providing locations, colour and picture quality that could be reconciled to the institutional values within British television. These qualities led to a growing sophistication and stylishness, but possessed a value and quality that was reflected in their critical reception. The three episodes of *Special Branch* illustrate its attempt to deploy, on the other hand, a realistic style that offered a greater visual objectivity, while maintaining the possibility of appealing to an audience interested in escapism, but as one critic of the time complained:

No doubt there are policemen who don't get on with each other; no doubt there may be reasons why such policemen should be made to work together; no doubt Detective Chief Inspectors sometimes spend their time keeping observation. But this is nonsense, and not viewable nonsense either.<sup>687</sup>

Such criticism would have led to a desire by the producers to seek new narrative directions in *Special Branch* and rely less on the 'objectivity' of the camera and deploy a stylised, fictional realism. This became increasingly visible in series four of *Special Branch* and was the dominant aesthetic in its replacement: *The Sweeney*. It can be argued that *The Sweeney* adopted much of the late style of its predecessor.

One of the last *Special Branch* episodes, *Intercept*, scripted by Ian Kennedy Martin, the originator of *The Sweeney*, demonstrates how the programmes segue between the older adventure series and the police series of the mid 1970s. *Intercept* is

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<sup>687</sup> Bernard Davies, 'One Man's Television', *Broadcast*, 20 April 1973, p. 25.

about a corrupt foreign VIP who has been robbed of a fortune in diamonds.<sup>688</sup> The quality of the script can be judged by the replacement of the character of Tom Haggerty with Detective Sergeant Mary Holmes, played by Susan Jameson, after Jameson had appeared in the police series *Z-Cars* and its sequel, *Softly, Softly*. Jameson was able to provide a respite from the laddish antics of Haggerty and offer a more nuanced persona that did not rely on action and macho posturing found in *Round the Clock* and *Double Exposure*. In minor ways, the inclusion of Jameson was to offer the possibility of interrogating policing as well as providing a conventional cops-versus-villains framework, an interest that Kennedy Martin was to repeat in his TV play, *Regan* (1974), shot for Euston's *Armchair Cinema*. The relationship between Craven and Holmes is represented to be unequal, but not on account of their ranks but because their status is affected by gender. Craven is protective of Holmes in a way that he would not be of one of his male colleagues and which Holmes challenges because it limits her professional ability to perform as a Special Branch officer. He forbids her to go undercover and she responds 'I wish you would stop treating me as a silly schoolgirl'. He denies that he is comparing her to 'the hockey team's answer to Modesty Blaise', a comic strip female character who had much in common with Emma Peel, being tough, but glamorous, and whose campy performance had appeared in the spy-fi film, *Modesty Blaise* (1966). Feminism was re-mapping definitions of masculinity and replacing the 'classic' adventure hero in *Intercept*, although, this would be avoided later in the macho adventure series, *The Professionals*.

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<sup>688</sup> *Special Branch*, 'Intercept', originally transmitted, 18 April 1974.

*Intercept* relies on what would become the standard discourse of the 1970s – the ‘exceptional state’, which was needed because of the threat of anarchy and terrorism. In *Intercept* there is an Irish bomber, Paddy Regan, and much of the story uses contemporary fears of the IRA and parcel bombs in central London that threatens the reliability and continuance of the state. However, with the addition of John ‘Biffo’ Bindon as Harry Beauchamp<sup>689</sup> the script is unable to decide whether it is an adventure story, a political thriller or a crime drama. The generic hybridity of *Special Branch* reveals why audiences may have been confused by it and helps again to explain its ultimate failure as a series. On the one hand, the use of a fictional foreign power, San Marcos, marks it as escapist as *Danger Man* in episodes such as *Parallel Lines Sometimes Meet* (see chapter four) and a segue between genres is a reminder of an alternative range of dramatic styles and themes possible in television because of its huge output.

For example, after the inclusion of the President of San Marcos, played by Peter Miles, looking suitably like a South American tyrant, followed by a chase through the white stucco houses of Bayswater, the episode ends jarringly with the apprehension of the chief villain, Hodges, played by Maxwell Shaw. Craven arrests Hodges but uses gratuitous violence. There is a car chase using a Sweeneyesque brown Ford Granada and gone are the back-projections of the car chases seen in earlier action-adventure series such as *The Saint*. However, greater authenticity is equally stylised and there is a climatic fight scene soon to become a familiar set-piece

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<sup>689</sup> Bindon had been cast in *Performance* (1970) as a minder to the Kray-like leader of an East End gang and in real-life Bindon was associated with the criminal underworld. See Philip Hoare, ‘Obituary: John Bindon’, *The Independent*, 6 November 1993  
 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-john-binton-1502412.html>> [accessed January 2011].



at the end of an episode of *The Sweeney*. The constrained and often sparing use of physical violence in many earlier episodes of *Special Branch* becomes almost Brechtian in *Intercept*, alerting the active viewer to a discourse about policing as Craven repeatedly pummels Hodge's head on a tree trunk matched by a sound that is sickening in its realism. The set-piece car chase and its action codes, which initially offers the audience coding signifying 'defence of the realm' reminiscent of older adventure series, is undermined by a final, brutal, almost pathological reality. Any future adventure series would have to negotiate between these different narrative strands and types of action that had become a fluid hybrid between earlier conventions borrowed from the 1960s, and the new fictional realism of the mid 1970s.

### ***Hazell (1977-78): Back to the Intimate Drama?***

Lloyd Shirley and George Taylor left Euston Films to form their own production company in August 1976.<sup>690</sup> They operated in the feature film production business while continuing to produce films for television – particularly for Thames Television. Their place on the Euston Films board was taken by Verity Lambert, Thames' Controller of Drama. However, with Shirley and Taylor already contracted to finish off the current series of thirteen *Sweeneys*, the feature film spin-off *Sweeney!* and a new series of *Van der Valk* (1972-77), on which they were to act as executive producers, the future of Euston Films itself as an operational unit appeared to be in terms of a lower profile. It meant that Thames Television, without waiting for

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<sup>690</sup> Anon, 'The Medium', *Broadcast*, 9 August 1976, p. 3. The production company is not named.

Euston, could attempt something more ambitious. The question was what, and Verity Lambert provided an answer of a kind:

I do think the department [Thames Drama] must try and provide drama that will please everybody some of the time, not everybody all of the time. That's very important in TV, with its very large audiences it shouldn't just be in a very narrow line. But having said that, I think there has been a very definite policy, but which has changed. When I first took over, I made 2 decisions which affected the sort of drama we were going to do. One, that I didn't want to do any costume drama for about 18 months because I felt it is very important to try and do contemporary drama. Two, somehow or other we had to try and do drama that came from our region. It's very difficult with the area we service. London's very cosmopolitan, the Home Counties are a mainly middle class area and it's much easier if you're working from Granada to do things that come from your region. But I did think if we could find things that came from the south...to get a kind of style and kind of feeling about our drama which meant it couldn't have come from any other company, it had to come from a London company.<sup>691</sup>

By 1976, Euston Films' influence on Thames was becoming apparent. The management at Thames would have preferred to do many of its action shows, such as *Hazell*, on film, as they had already done with *Special Branch*. It was felt by most people in television to be a faster medium than tape because the mobility of 16mm equipment and the sophistication of film editing and dubbing techniques allowed for the inclusion of extra pace in a show on film.<sup>692</sup> But if people did not think *Hazell* could be done on tape at all then it would not have been done. This was Verity Lambert's view:

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<sup>691</sup> Manuel Alvarado, unpublished interview with Verity Lambert, Head of Drama, 12 October 1977, British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p. 2.

<sup>692</sup> Ted Childs quoted in Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made For Television: Euston Films Limited*. (London: British Film Institute in association with Thames Television International, 1985), p. 61.

I know it can be done in the studio because I've done other series like it in other companies. It's a hassle, it seems like a nightmare to begin with, but it can be made to work and work well...If I'd felt really strongly that *Hazell* could only have been done on film then I would have put it off until *The Sweeney* ended and put it in the gap. But I didn't.<sup>693</sup>

When asked to compare a show made by Thames and a show made by Euston, Lambert pointed out that:

...Euston is a four waller, it can do as much or as little as required. It's because the people who work within this studio [Teddington], the technicians, feel with some good reasons that they don't want all the good things to go out to Euston Films. There is a considerable concern that if that happened there would be nothing happening in these studios except for very ordinary things and there would be a lot of very bored underworked people...I felt that it [*Hazell*] could be done like many other successful things like *Callan*, *Public Eye*, all those things were done on that kind of a schedule and didn't suffer because of it.<sup>694</sup>

The tension between the two methods of working, either on film or on video, can be seen to have directly impacted on the materiality of *Hazell*. When asked about Verity Lambert's claim that *Hazell* could be done as a successful film/video hybrid, Jim Goddard, the director of the very first episode, *Hazell Plays Solomon*, was to respond that she had been put under pressure to shoot on video.<sup>695</sup> In fact, it was a political decision taken to ease the possibility of any further industrial action. Prior to thinking about making *Hazell* in 1976, Thames Television had already been badly bruised by a confrontation with the Electricians' Union (EETPU) in a dispute over the filming of *Van der Valk* that had nearly led to the cancellation of the show; one of its

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<sup>693</sup> Manuel Alvarado, unpublished interview with Verity Lambert, Head of Drama, 11 October 1977, British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p. 10.

<sup>694</sup> Alvarado, unpublished interview with Verity Lambert, p. 10.

<sup>695</sup> Jim Goddard, author's interview, 20 January 2011.

most popular.<sup>696</sup> However, officially, the claim would be that *Hazell* would demonstrate how a television adventure show could continue to be made successfully inside the television studio and a reversion to the days of the original videotaped *Special Branch* and *Callan*.

June Roberts became the producer of *Hazell* after being chosen by Verity Lambert. She was brought in despite having very little experience; her only other series had been *Couples* (1975). *Couples* had been a bit of an experiment and had ‘altered the possibilities of daytime TV.’<sup>697</sup> Hence, the possibility of experimenting with television form was there from the start in *Hazell*. However, Roberts began her work by screening two film noir classics for her screenwriters: *Double Indemnity* and *The Big Sleep*. The production of *Hazell* became an interesting account of the relationship between film noir of the classic Hollywood film, the desire by some directors of the show to emulate the tropes of 16mm film, and the desire by Lambert to prove that successful drama could be shot on tape in the studio. Within these tensions, the aesthetic and narrative constraints of a television series shot in the studio emerged. The conscious decision to use a style and technology (lights) that could be encoded as different filmic styles on a show that would be mostly videotaped inside the TV studio demonstrates the lack of a unified style.

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<sup>696</sup> Anon, ‘The Medium’, *Broadcast*, 13 September 1976, p. 3. The third series to be shot on film was almost abandoned because of the opposition from the EEPTU Union shop. The EEPTU had demanded work for its members on the new series, although, its members were ‘employed under television conditions’. Frantic attempts had been made by freelance members of all the film and television unions to remove the objections to the production of *Van der Valk*, and not to lose work. The dispute did not highlight simply the problems between unions and management, but the split between freelance and permanent staff working either on film outside the studio or on video in the studio.

<sup>697</sup> Manuel Alvarado and Edward Buscombe, *Hazell* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), p. 32. Daytime television had been introduced in 1972 and the full daytime schedule was established on Thames in the week beginning 16 October. See Anon, ‘The Look of Daytime’, *Television Mail*, 13 October 1972, p. 10.

On the attempt to produce a noir style, Brian Farnham, one of the directors, argued that a key problem was that ‘because whatever else the colour television camera does, one thing it really does is glamorise everything. To make things look tatty and dirty and filthy with a colour television camera is the most difficult thing to do’.<sup>698</sup> However, this appears to be less a function to do with the nature of video itself, and more about the desire to maintain standards of picture quality enforced by the IBA.<sup>699</sup> When talking about another earlier Thames series, *Rock Follies* (1976), which was shot on video, Farnham was to say ‘...we’d been very happy with the lighting, given the limitations we were working on, and we’d been graded technically 2...which meant that we had a sub-standard grading...but artistically it worked marvellously’.<sup>700</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of his misgivings about shooting on video, Farnham believed that if *Hazell* had been shot on film there would have been a tendency for it to have become ‘Sweeneyesque’.

...it would have become car chases and all that kind of stuff and rushing through...one of the things that one was trying to get away from, and which *Target* [BBC1] has become...and all those American things which the Americans do better than us for some reason...they’ve got an organisation which is geared to it [*The Sweeney*], which Thames Television is not. Euston Films are geared to it...<sup>701</sup>

James Hazell, played by Nicholas Ball, was a former policeman turned private eye. Many of the clichés of the situation were used – an uneasy relationship with the regular police; a cynicism which sometimes looked like corruptibility. However,

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<sup>698</sup> Brian Farnham, unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado, British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p. 38.

<sup>699</sup> See chapter 3, pp. 170-171.

<sup>700</sup> Brian Farnham, unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado, British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p. 42.

<sup>701</sup> Brian Farnham, unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado, p.42.

*Hazell* strove to do more than this because it tried (at least in the planning stages) to build up the atmosphere and environment of classic noir adventure. The disparity between the romantic Hollywood version immortalised by Bogart and the difficulty of repeating the same use of style on television would be visible in *Hazell*. It was also revealing that instead of realism, Roberts had chosen to create a semi-mythologised image of London that could be achieved using expressionist noir lighting and its suggestion of a Manichaeian sense of fable.

Noir is also characterised by recurrent narrative and formal devices such as a complicated plot involving flashbacks. However, it was Verity Lambert who blocked the use of subjective camera and flashback sequences because, she believed, they would be difficult for the TV audience to understand as well as hard to sustain if shooting in the studio. June Roberts later remarked that she never intended to use subjective camerawork throughout, but only in the opening shots of the first episode.<sup>702</sup> Subjective camerawork exists in a few places in *Hazell Plays Solomon*.<sup>703</sup> The Abrey family live in a flat whose door has a peep-hole and we get a view through it using a fish-eye lens of *Hazell*, but the problem of using subjective camerawork remained.

The problem of achieving a unified aesthetic in the show can be seen, moreover, when a hand-held video camera was requested by one of the directors, Alistair Reid, because of a complicated scene in his episode, *Hazell Pays a Debt*.<sup>704</sup> June Roberts admitted that she would have liked the camera (only one of two owned by Teddington at the time) to be scheduled so that the team on *Hazell* could shoot as

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>703</sup> *Hazell*, 'Hazell Plays Solomon', originally transmitted, 16 January 1978.

<sup>704</sup> *Hazell*, 'Hazell Pays a Debt', originally transmitted, 23 January 1978.

much of each scene from Hazell's POV and achieve far more interesting effects with a hand-held camera. 'I realise that OB units will always have priority but wondered if on each episode you could allocate it [the camera] whenever our dates don't clash with anyone else using it', she requested.<sup>705</sup> In a script conference, Peter Kew was to say that he was personally very worried about using that kind of technique amongst studio cameras:

...inevitably you do your first cut with the studio camera which is balanced, horizontal is perfect, it's all fixed, I feel that in the filming sequences this is different because no one is going to pretend the film is the same as studio, we all know it isn't...I have grave doubts about mixing the two, the prime value it seems to me of the small camera is to use it in inaccessible areas of the set, for instance David has planned a kind of three storey, boom, boom, to go up against the gantry, I mean this is very loose at this stage it's not definite where it would [go]...<sup>706</sup>

In *Hazell*, the first person narrative would be clever stylised wordplay; the dialogue spare, witty and laconic. The use of film was planned to be comprised largely of short, fast-moving sequences with lots of background noise and physical action. By contrast, the studio pace was planned to be slower and with fewer sound effects. However, the problem of finding and keeping to a consistent style for the whole series meant that a radically unusual lighting style could not be sustained across the whole of the series and the Hollywood noir style of the 1940s became vestigial compared to what had been hoped for in early planning of the show. The opening and end credits of the show were the few remaining signs of the hoped-for

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<sup>705</sup> June Roberts to Peter Kew, Manager of Central Planning, memo, 2 December 1976, British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection.

<sup>706</sup> Unidentified man but probably Peter Kew, Script Conference, (no precise date, 1976), British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p.10.

style that the producer, June Roberts, had originally aspired to accomplish. The titles were black and white and Hazell's face was picked out in low-key lighting.

*Hazell Meets the First Eleven* (the fifth episode of the first series) has the most examples of the series of a noir style reminiscent of the classic Philip Marlowe films.<sup>707</sup> Hazell has been paid to investigate Jonathan Clayton, a double-dealing character who has a secret about his income; he runs a very successful shop in Soho selling pornography. Clayton is also courting a seventeen year old girl, Sara, whose wealthy parents have hired Hazell to check his background. Her mother, Mrs Courtney, is a waspish character, but exudes a slow-burning sensuality that is dramatised using performance and camera to indicate that Hazell is interested in her. When Hazell first meets Courtney at her home, he has been playing a few chords of 'As Time Goes By' on the piano and there is some initially snappish wordplay. 'You don't look like man who peeks through key-holes' she tells him, to which he rejoins 'I must have left my dirty raincoat at the cleaners'. It later transpires that Mrs Courtney prefers her men to be young and has had an affair with Clayton, her daughter's lover.

In keeping with the series' intention to avoid the action codes of *The Sweeney* and give more time for the development of characters, the episode's narrative has a strong stress on social hierarchies which are used to create a sub-text. The paternal leadership of the Winchester/Balliol educated Paul Eddington in *Special Branch*, or even the character of Hardy in *Danger Man*, is replaced by a more conscious depiction of class and *Hazell* becomes a device to allow the audience to be critical of class relations. It is from this that *Hazell* gets its narrative power. *Hazell Meets the*

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<sup>707</sup> *Hazell*, 'Hazell Meets the First Eleven', originally transmitted, 13 February 1978.



*First Eleven* uses class relations as a metaphor for the duplicity of Courtney's parents. The Courtneys maintain an upper-class exclusivity but this is to disguise their true motives. They do not object to their daughter's marriage to Clayton because he has lied about his class origins but because they do not want to give up her trust money, which allows them to continue to enjoy their own affluent and sophisticated life-style.

Later, the aspiration for affluence and stylish sophistication is equally visible in the character of Hazell, who is neither as gritty nor as unglamorous, as might be supposed from the initial planning of the show. Instead, Hazell inhabits proximate worlds as might be expected by now in an adventure series; firstly, he drives a Triumph Stag, a car designed by the Italian designer, Giovanni Michelotti, and envisioned as a luxury sports car. In *Hazell Plays Solomon*, we see that Hazell lives in a mews flat fashionably appointed with a drinks cabinet, antique paintings on the wall and *objets d'art* in his wall cabinets. In the flat, he meets Detective Inspector 'Choc' Minty, played by Roddy McMillan, and, in his silk bed robe, appears as an icon of 1970s 'cool' next to the sombrely dressed detective inspector. Hazell reclines on his stylish sofa, drinking mineral water. Roddy McMillan describes him as a 'London flyboy' and wonders how he ever got into the police force, signalling that Hazell fulfils more the role of the playboy adventurer rather than the crime investigator represented by John Thaw as Jack Regan in *The Sweeney*.

Jeremy Isaacs, the Director of Programmes of Thames (1974-78), also believed that *Hazell* was not a successor to *The Sweeney*, but could exist as an opportunity to ask interesting questions: 'Who are our heroes, who are the cowboys and Indians? *The (New) Avengers* was amusing hokum. On the other hand,

characters that have a relationship to reality. Realistic situations for adventure stories...where do we find them? London?',<sup>708</sup> *Hazell* would be an adventurer rather than a policeman, eschewing realism for escapism, portraying the detective as Hero, but able to interrogate the ideological assumptions of the detective and the villain.

## **Conclusion:**

### **Celluloid and the End of the Studio Drama**

This chapter has examined the lack of a unified aesthetic in the adventure genre in order to address questions to do with the discourse of quality and value in *Special Branch* and *Hazell*. It has shown that television can be a medium of stylistic expression, but this raises other issues to do with creativity within an industrialised medium; one in which the division of labour, in the period under observation, was complex. This complexity meant that programme production, according to practitioners, was structured to disperse or curtail creative freedom. The role of various practitioners, including the producer, director, writer, and studio crew suggests that, as in the earlier telefilm of the 1960s, a high degree of professional competence was required to operate within production norms. However, the attempt at a more cultural output of production, or a system of authorship, created a tension. The differing sets of criteria that governed definitions of quality ensured that the experience of producing *Special Branch* on location and *Hazell* inside the TV studio was affected by competing ideologies about shooting on film for television. It raised

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<sup>708</sup> Jeremy Isaacs, unpublished interview with Manuel Alvarado, 29 October 1976, British Film Institute, *Hazell* Collection, p. 9.

the issue of which medium, film or the electronic studio, by the mid to late 1970s, was suitable for serious drama or entertainment.

The desire by directors and producers, such as Loach and Garnett and, later, those at Euston Films, to shoot on location and to be 'liberated' from the studio had by the end of the 1970s become more of a financial necessity as budgets were squeezed.<sup>709</sup> The studios had been originally designed at the end of the 1950s to make it possible to rehearse 25 minutes of screen time during the day and transmit it the same evening. Since programmes had stopped being broadcast live, the shortcoming of the studio had been emphasised by several practitioners in preference for filming on location on 16mm film. A series like *Hazell* did not mark a return to the 'intimate style' because the era of the studios for the production of drama (not light entertainment) was drawing to a close.<sup>710</sup> The 1970s represented the last flowering of studio based drama at Thames, including *Jennie* (1974), *Napoleon and Love* (1974), *Rock Follies* (1976-77), *Edward and Mrs Simpson* (1978).

During the 1970s, we have already learnt in this chapter, there was a rash of film production subsidiaries being created by the major ITV companies.<sup>711</sup> The development of the made-for-TV film is beyond the scope of the thesis, but by the late 1970s London Weekend Television had engaged ex-Euston films executives Lloyd Shirley and George Taylor to produce up to eight movies-for-TV, if not feature films,

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<sup>709</sup> In part due to 'local agreements' between unions and management which limited available shooting time. The design of sets was referred to as 'job and finish'. This practice meant that assignments were strictly controlled by rotas and stewards which led to staff being replaced in the middle of an assignment with no reference to programme needs. See the case study, Mike Chattin, *Reorganisation of Scenic Construction and Scenic Operations*, published by BETA, 1985. (Found in BFI Thames Television Collection).

<sup>710</sup> Studio 1, the biggest of the studios at Teddington was used for large entertainment shows such as *Frankie Howerd Meets The Bee Gees* (1968).

<sup>711</sup> See p. 255.

to be financed by LWT.<sup>712</sup> LWT had also been associated with Albert Fennell and Brian Clemens, the creators of *The Professionals* (1977-83), an action/adventure series shot on film.<sup>713</sup> Thames Television, already operating in the cinema feature market with its Euston Films subsidiary, was considering expansion into the made-for-TV field, and thinking of investing £9 million by 1978.<sup>714</sup> It appears, therefore, that the tension between shooting future television drama within the studio or on film, as it became more common for a production to be made for both the domestic and the international market, in 1978, was being resolved in favour of film, the year *Hazell* appeared on television screens. By the mid to late 1970s, the production of studio drama, as opposed to using film for television drama, was under growing pressure, which would lead, in the 1980s, to the abandonment of older production methods.

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<sup>712</sup> Anon, 'At Last: British Movies for TV', *Broadcast*, 13 February 1978, p. 4

<sup>713</sup> Anon, 'At Last: British Movies for TV'.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

## **Conclusion: The Specificities of Film on British Television, 1955-1978**

This thesis has explored the use of the television adventure show within a specific historical and national context in relation to its formal 'filmic' and technical qualities; economic developments within the television industry; debates about the value of particular programmes and their authorship. Although the thesis has been concerned with the historical development, and patterns, of critical engagement with one generic example of the television series, a factor of equal significance has been the gradual change in television's cultural and critical status. This last factor acknowledges that a text on television possesses diverse traditions which do not conform to a dominant understanding about television in this era as only being technically constrained. At the same time, television's specificity has been examined to try and overcome the difficulty of finding a secure analysis of the adventure text even if a historical analysis makes clear that the use of film on television has always eluded a single categorical definition. In these ways, the thesis addresses how television, even at this early stage in its development, was able to differentiate itself from the idea of flow as formulated by Williams and Ellis.

When, in the introduction of this thesis, Noel Carroll offers the view that the primary attributes of broadcast television privilege the televisual glance as opposed to the filmic gaze because of the ephemeral quality of the television, the development of a film aesthetic for television since the 1950s complicates these claims. Although it is impossible to make a generalisation about the shows that have been analysed, due to their often variegated nature, a greater use of visual style overall did allow for the creation of a domestic and international brand that set the programming style found at ITC, ABC-TV or Euston Films apart from a videotaped production. It would be too much to claim that a series, because it was shot on film, necessarily lent itself to

greater aesthetic richness or experimentation. The industrialisation of television and its division of labour is structured around the need for a regular output of programmes. However, the case studies offer evidence that filmed television could go against the dominant paradigm of an intimate medium and a dramatic form that was essentially ‘naturalistic’ or relied on ‘people’s verbal relationships with each other’.<sup>715</sup> Instead, within an industrialised medium it is possible to find examples of the British telefilm and shot-on-film drama that used action and spectacle that could exploit generic verisimilitude and authorship in ways prescient of modern day television programmes.

In chapter one, the thesis acknowledged that the public broadcasting model formed a dominant discourse of service in British television, but the development of the telefilm and its corollary of live/videotaped versus film recordings was not only a question of aesthetics. The television text as a concept and as a practice was different from the discrete unity of the commercial film because of flow, which this thesis has acknowledged was a mark of its distinction from visiting the cinema. The chapter has discussed how flow was part of television’s phenomenology, as an analogue of the routine necessary for it to become a domestic medium for private consumption.

The chapter analyses how, because of flow, Williams and Ellis argue that television has an ideological function that demands regularities of production to provide material on a continuous basis in the home. To overcome the problem of television’s original ephemerality, its inability to record programmes, a film transcription technique was developed. The result was that the telerecording of a live

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<sup>715</sup> Kennedy Martin, ‘Nats Go Home’, p. 24.

programme could be shown again and again. The placement of a recorded programme at a particular time during the day and across the week encouraged the formation of the filmed series, originating in the US, but modified to contribute and respond to flow in the UK. The telefilm was a stable form that was repeatable, and likely to appeal to the same audience as part of the weekly flow. However, crucially, because television stranded its output, the telefilm series could also assume a special status in the schedule. This is a modification of the ideas regarding flow that Williams and Ellis present so persuasively. Programmes could be placed to have a greater or lesser place in the schedule and appeal to an audience, which this thesis acknowledges could have contained younger children, teenagers or older people, with their own needs and interests.

One possible mode within the telefilm was a programme which incorporated action and spectacle and would be different from what else was on. Nevertheless, the series form was also determined by the need to provide a repeatable formula with familiar characters. However, the distinct forms of address to a domestic audience by British television meant that the indigenous telefilm did not ignore a strategy of selling programmes that depended on notions of quality and value derived from a service ethic. The deployment of celluloid for the action-adventure genre led to a different social and narrative space from the one that television had opened up with the single play. These had often carried a stronger sense of the naturalistic and the mundane than those in the telefilm. The telefilm can be dismissed as a commodified form of mass culture, but the action-adventure series in Britain became a set of programmes that responded to the demand for value and quality, and ITV created programmes incorporating both the formulaic and experimental.

In chapter two, the relationship of the telefilm to the large output of television has been examined to reveal how the industrial transformation of television, after the launch of ITV in 1955, had several consequences. Firstly, because it created a form that was determined by the desire to reach a mass audience, the establishing of the telefilm was a blurring of drama with light entertainment or, within the terms set by public service, between the serious and the popular. Secondly, competition existed between the rival broadcasters within Britain's duopoly to build an industry that did not rely on American imports. Nevertheless, the development of the British action-adventure telefilm traversed national boundaries and was sold in Britain and overseas. The chapter deals, in detail, with the modification to the form of the imported US telefilm. Thirdly, the form and mode of the telefilm relied on cinematic aesthetics, as the corporate culture of ITV quickly insisted on the best in terms of technical crew and the deployment of professional ideologies of film-making. As an institution, it applied a set of criteria that sought cultural and production value as a method of both comparing itself to, and differentiating its programmes from, US competition.

The figures of Sydney Newman and Lew Grade, who may be labelled 'organisational men', have helped to demonstrate how television's vast output led to the emergence of a tension between the idea of public service and the need to create programme norms as they became commodified. These norms relied on cinematic aesthetics and norms within television, which creators of the telefilm had to conform to. The telefilm was regarded as culturally impoverished because it was a commodified form of entertainment and blamed for creeping Americanisation. Yet, the organisation of production which emerged after 1955 called for high professional competence if not necessarily the skills of the individual author. Skilled practitioners such as Monty Berman are illustrative of the deployment of cinematic norms of film-



making, albeit from low to medium budgeted films, within the action-adventure series that sought to build audience loyalty to characters and subjects that appeared weekly.

In chapter three, instead of a technological determinism due to the use of film, an intentional relationship between aesthetic innovation and technological change can be argued. This relationship enabled the representation of the move from austerity to consumer affluence in the 1960s and formed discourse about modernity and obsolescence. In ways that were unimaginable in drama that had been shot live or taped in a studio, the use of 35mm film allowed 'colour' and the maximisation of physical space. The recording of two discontinuous spaces; the everyday and the spectacular, allowed the combination of intimacy and distance, which could remain distinct or form proximate worlds. A dialectic of 'us' and 'them' – the 'us' being the values of British taste and public service and the 'them' an internationalised market – on television brought together different forms of television and film.

Older values – textual as well as cultural – were made to blend with the new as television addressed a transatlantic 'youth' and offered to represent its rebellious attitudes. The international trade in the television adventure series enabled some shows to deploy values associated with modernity and consumerism and values associated with tradition and service whose proximate worlds created dramatic conflict and a further modification of the action-adventure genre.

In the early 1970s, the norms of film-making for television drama were modified again, as 16mm film came to replace the earlier format of the telefilm. Notions of action and spectacle, noticeable in the action-adventure telefilm, became a 'gritty' realism as it was transferred to 16mm. However, the technological change from 35mm to 16mm film created a conflict between technical and aesthetic quality. Earlier questions to do with artistic quality and entertainment values were re-cast.

The issue of quality has appeared with a variety of different meanings in this thesis. In the 1960s, the electronic TV studio had been regarded as the proper place for drama, but, by the 1970s, was becoming a place of low particularity and beginning to be associated more with the production of entertainment. The producers of drama sought to film on location as a method that was more analogous to the news or documentary. However, Thames Television continued to need to attract a large audience using entertainment values that relied on types of physical action and spectacle.

An older discourse of 'quality' within the action-adventure telefilm had been mediated by production values that were acceptable to a worldwide and US audience. However, the choice of shooting on 16mm film by Euston Films marked a modification of the narrative and aesthetic criteria of the British adventure drama compared to those which had been applied to the 1960s telefilm. There was a resistance by practitioners at Euston Films to professional film-making ideologies. A modification of the criteria produced a tension with the television regulator, the IBA, but the chapter also discusses how a simple opposition is misleading. Instead, there was a complex negotiation of quality within Thames/Euston Films and its relationship to commercial film. The experience of trying to make *Hazell*, an adventure series in the studio, further addresses the tensions within definitions of artistic quality inside an industrialised medium, such as television.

Chapter four interrogates these issues further by examining the discourses in some key programmes. It reveals the tension between organisational pressures to conform to a realistic aesthetic that was accessible and meaningful to a large audience, while also being stylish. The establishment of proximate worlds between the visual style of the programme and an aesthetic that depended on the written word

of the script suggests the difference between ingenuity rather than genius, and offers thoughts about definitions of creativity. This is further complicated because instead of the writer as a creative author, in the personae of Brian Clemens, Harry Junkin and Terry Nation, there was the wordsmith under the control of the producer or script editor. In this way, the series creates its own fictional world and norms within it. The claim that character was dispensed with and replaced by only a visual style, misunderstands something about the nature of television, which is to provide a vast output by organisations concerned about audience response to their programmes rather than the individual contribution of the creative artist.

It is this tension that lies at the heart of understanding how aesthetic experiments were made in the 1960s action-adventure telefilms, which remained within acceptable norms – textual, generic and narrative. If programmes in the 1960s had a position on the genre they were working in, television was still a relatively new form of mass entertainment and it was later that aspects of fictionalisation became plausible and acceptable as an effect. This had happened as early as *Danger Man* in an episode such as *The Ubiquitous Mr Lovegrove*, but it was only in *The Prisoner*, much more than *The Avengers*, that a series became about television drama itself.

In chapter five, the decline of the British telefilm, at the beginning of the 1970s, can be attributed to the rising cost of filming for the US and overseas market, the demise of ABC-TV and its replacement by Thames Television, as well as a concomitant interest in realistic drama. The increased use of 16mm film in the period between 1969 and 1974, initially by Thames Television and later by Euston Films, attempted to find a form that could fulfil both the demands of an indigenous mode that demanded ‘quality’ programming and one that could cater to a mass market and the export market. The demands for a mode that would be distinct from the older

transatlantic telefilm should not ignore that Thames Television had by 1974 set up its own international sales subsidiary.

An adventure series could work with and against generic expectations deriving from its relationships with the thriller and crime genres. As film became a more important part of television, there developed an exchange of generic forms and production techniques between these genres. The adventure of the 1960s, which had become a staple of ITC's dramas of the 1960s, would reappear in *The Protectors* before their replacement on British TV by Euston Films in the 1970s as a further modification took place. At the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, the film series had become 'adventures', but the ITV regions, particularly ABC-TV, were producing 'thrillers' or adventures with a thriller basis on videotape. *Special Branch*, shot on 16mm, marked an attempt at incorporating the crime thriller and its realism with entertainment values associated with the older action-adventure show: its failure or success, notwithstanding, reveals some of the cultural discourses of the time.

The analysis of the adventure series has sought to demonstrate that British television had not used a single, highly differentiated model in all its drama. Instead, as we have seen, a more complex picture can be formed in which rival discourses about the function of television in Britain came to be reconciled or made to work side-by-side. Using the adventure series, some of these discourses have been examined and reveal that television can be a mass medium which is also capable of being a medium of personal stylistic expression, in which identified stylistic qualities can be seen to be personal predilections *and* accommodations to production conditions. In popular television drama several stylistic variables were capable of manipulation involving a greater range of creative abilities.

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Writ: Tony Williamson, Prod: Verity Lambert, Dir: Philip Dudley

*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, Sapphire Films/ITC, ITV, tx. 25 September 1955 – 1 March 1959

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'The Town of No Return', Season 4, Episode 1, tx. 2 October 1965  
Writ: Brian Clemens, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Roy Ward Baker  
'The Gravediggers', Season 4, Episode 2, tx. 9 October 1965  
Writ: Malcolm Hulke, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Quentin Lawrence  
'The Cybernauts', Season 4, Episode 3, tx. 16 October 1965  
Writ: Philip Levene, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Sidney Havers  
'Death at Bargain Prices', Season 4, Episode 4, tx. 23 October 1965  
Writ: Brian Clemens, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Charles Crichton  
'The Master Minds', Season 4, Episode 6, tx. 6 November 1965  
Writ: Robert Banks Stewart, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Peter Graham Scott  
'The Man Eater of Surrey Green', Season 4, Episode 11, tx. 11 December 1965  
Writ: Philip Levene, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Sidney Hayers  
'The Girl from Auntie', Season 4, Episode 17, tx. 22 January 1966  
Writ: Roger Marshall, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Roy Ward Baker  
'The House That Jack Built', Season 4, Episode 23, tx. 5 March 1966  
Writ: Brian Clemens, Prod: Julian Wintle, Dir: Don Leaver  
'Epic', Season 5, Episode 11, tx. 1 April 1967  
Writ: Brian Clemens, Prod: Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell, Dir: James Hill  
'Game', Season 6, Episode 2, tx. 2 October 1968  
Writ: Richard Harris, Prod: Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell, Dir: Robert Fuest

*The Buccaneers*, ITP, ITV, 19 September 1956 – 12 June 1957

*Callan*, ABC-TV/Thames Television, ITV, tx. 8 July 1967-24 May 1972  
'Summoned to Appear', Season 3, Episode 2, tx. 15 April 1970  
Writ: Trevor Preston, Prod: Reginald Collin, Dir: Voytek

*The Champions*, ITC, ITV, tx. 25 September 1968 – 30 April 1969

*Cheyenne*, Warner Brothers, ABC, tx. 1955 - 1963

*Colonel of Scotland Yard*, Official Films, ITV, tx. 24 September 1955 – 25 February 1956

*Coronation Street*, Granada, ITV, 1960 - ongoing

*Danger Man*, ITC, ITV, tx. 11 September 1960-12 January 1968

‘View from the Villa’, Season 1, Episode 1, tx. 11 September 1960

Writ: Brian Clemens, Prod. Ralph Smart, Dir. Terry Bishop

‘Time to Kill’, Season 1, Episode 2, tx. 18 September 1960

Writ: Brian Clemens, Prod: Ralph Smart, Dir: Ralph Smart

‘The Key’, Season 1, Episode 11, tx. 20 November 1960

Writ: Jack Whittingham, Prod: Ralph Smart, Dir: Seth Holt

‘Colonel Rodriguez’, Season 1, Episode 15, tx. 18 December 1960

Writ: Ralph Smart, Prod: Ralph Smart, Dir: Julian Amyes

‘The Vacation’, Season 1, Episode 20, tx. 29 January 1961

Writ: Ralph Smart, Prod: Ralph Smart, Dir: Patrick McGoohan

‘The Honeymooners’, Season 1, Episode 22, tx. 2 April 1961

Writ: Ralph Smart, Prod: Ralph Smart, Dir: Charles Frend

‘Bury the Dead’, Season 1, Episode 27, tx. 7 May 1961

Writ: Ralph Smart, Prod: Ralph Smart, Dir: Clive Donner

‘Colony Three’, Season 2, Episode 3, tx. 27 October 1964

Writ: Donald Jonson, Prod: Sidney Cole, Dir: Don Chaffey

‘The Ubiquitous Mr Lovegrove’, Season 2, Episode 18, tx. 16 February 1965

Writ: David Stone, Prod: Sidney Cole, Dir. Don Chaffey

‘Parallel Lines Sometimes Meet’, Season 2, Episode 22, tx. 16 March 1965

Writ: Malcolm Hulke, Prod: Sidney Cole, Dir: Don Chaffey

*Department S*, ITC, ITV, tx. 9 March 1969 – 4 March 1970

*Dick Barton*, BBC, tx. 1946 - 1951

*Dragnet*, Mark VII, NBC, tx. 1951 – 1959

*Fabian of the Yard*, BBC, tx. 13 November 1954 – 6 February 1956

*Hancock’s Half Hour*, BBC, tx. 1956 – 1961

‘Sunday Afternoon at Home’, Series 5, Episode 14, tx. 22 April 1958

*Hazell*, Thames Television, ITV, tx. 16 January 1978 – 5 July 1979

‘Hazell Plays Solomon’, Season 1, Episode 1, tx. 16 January 1978.

Writ: Gordon Williams and Terry Venables, Prod: June Roberts, Dir: Jim Goddard

‘Hazell Pays a Debt’, Season 1, Episode 2, tx. 23 January 1978.

Writ: Gordon Williams, Prod: June Roberts, Dir: Alastair Reid

‘Hazell Meets the First Eleven’, Season 1, Episode 5, tx. 13 February 1978.

Writ: Tony Hoare and Gordon Williams, Prod: June Roberts, Dir: Moira Armstrong



*The Human Jungle*, ABC-TV, ITV, tx. 30 March 1963 – 21 December 1964

*The Invisible Man*, ATV, ITV, tx. 14 September 1958 – 5 July 1959

'The Big Plot', Season 2, Episode 13, tx. 5 July 1959.

Writ: Ian Stuart Black, Prod: Ralph Smart, Dir: Peter Maxwell

*ITV Playhouse*, ABC-TV/Thames Television, ITV, tx. 25 September 1967 – 10 August 1982.

'Suspect', Season 3, Episode 12, tx. 17 November 1969

Writ: Mike Hodges, Prod: Lloyd Shirley, Dir: Mike Hodges

'Rumour', Season 3, Episode 22, tx. 2 March 1970

Writ: Mike Hodges, Prod: Lloyd Shirley, Dir: Mike Hodges

*Ivanhoe*, Screen Gems/Sydney Box Productions, ITV, 1958 – 1959

*Jewel in the Crown*, Granada Television, ITV, tx. 9 January 1984 – 3 April 1984

*Man From Interpol*, Danzinger Productions, ITV, 1960-1

*The Mask of Janus*, BBC, BBC2, tx. 8 October 1965 – 17 December 1965

*Monitor*, BBC, 1958 - 1965

*North West Frontier*, 1959, Dir: J. Lee Thompson

*The Persuaders*, ITC, ITV, tx. 17 September 1971 – 25 February 1972

*Police Surgeon*, ABC-TV, ITV, 10 September 1960 – 3 December 1960

*The Prisoner*, ITC, ITV, tx. 29 September 1967 – 1 February 1968

'Arrival', Episode 1, tx. 29 September 1967

Writ: George Markstein and David Tomblin, Prod: David Tomblin, Dir: Don Chaffey

'The Schizoid Man', Episode 5, tx. 27 October 1967

Writ: Patrick McGoochan, Prod: David Tomblin, Dir: Patrick McGoochan

'The General', Episode 6, tx. 3 November 1967.

Writ: Lewis Greifer, Prod: David Tomblin, Dir: Peter Graham Scott

*The Protectors*, ITC, ITV, tx. 7 July 1972 – 1 February 1974

'For the Rest of Your Natural...', Season 1, Episode 14, tx. 5 January 1973.

Writ: Tony Barwick, Prod: Gerry Anderson, Dir: John Hough

'With a Little Help from My Friends', Season 1, Episode 21, tx. 23 February 1973.

Writ: Sylvia Anderson, Prod: Gerry Anderson, Dir: Jeremy Summers

'The First Circle', Season 1, Episode 25, tx. 23 March 1973.

Writ: Tony Barwick, Prod: Gerry Anderson, Dir: Don Chaffey

'A Case for the Right', Season 1, Episode 26, tx. 30 March 1973.

Writ: Jesse and Pat Lasky, Prod: Gerry Anderson, Dir: Michael Lindsay-Hogg

'Quin', Season 2, Episode 1, tx. 21 September 1973.

Writ: Trevor Preston, Prod: Gerry Anderson, Dir: Don Leaver

'Burning Bush', Season 2, Episode 18, tx. 18 January 1974.

Writ: Trevor Preston, Prod: Gerry Anderson, Dir: Don Leaver

*Quatermass Experiment*, BBC, tx. 18 July 1953 – 22 August 1953  
Writ: Nigel Kneale, Prod: Rudolph Cartier

*Quatermass II*, BBC, tx. 22 October 1955 – 26 November 1955  
Writ: Nigel Kneale, Prod: Rudolph Cartier

*Quatermass and the Pit*, BBC, tx. 22 December 1958 – 26 January 1959  
Writ: Nigel Kneale, Prod: Rudolph Cartier

*Reilly – Ace of Spies*, Euston Films, ITV, tx. 5 September 1983 – 16 November 1983.

*Saber of London*, Danzinger Productions, ITV, tx. 1959 - 1962

*The Saint*, ITC, ITV, tx. 4 October 1962 – 9 February 1969

*Sir Francis Drake*, ITC, ITV, tx. 12 November 1961 – 20 May 1962

*Softly, Softly*, BBC, tx. 1966 - 1969

*Special Branch*, Euston Films, ITV, tx. 17 September 1969 - 9 May 1974

‘Round the Clock’, Season 3, Episode 2, tx. 11 April 1973.

Writ: Trevor Preston, Prod: Geoffrey Gilbert, Dir: Mike Vardy

‘Inquisition’, Season 3, Episode 3, tx. 18 April 1973.

Writ: Trevor Preston, Prod: Geoffrey Gilbert, Dir: Mike Vardy

‘All the King’s Men’, Season 3, Episode 8, tx. 23 May 1973

Writ: Trevor Preston, Prod: Geoffrey Gilbert, Dir: Dennis Vance

‘Double Exposure’, Season 2, Episode 1, tx. 14 February 1974

Writ: Michael J. Bird, Prod: Ted Childs, Dir: Don Leaver

‘Intercept’, Season 4, Episode 10, tx. 18 April 1974

Writ: Ian Kennedy Martin, Prod: Ted Childs, Dir: William Brayne

*The Spies*, BBC, BBC2, tx. 1 January 1966 – 16 April 1966

*Spindoe*, Granada, ITV, tx. 1968

*The Sweeney*, Euston Films, ITV, tx. 2 January 1975 – 28 December 1978

*Tales of Edgar Wallace*, Merton Park Studios, ITV, tx. September 1960 – October 1965

*The Third Man*, BBC and National Telefilm Associates (NTA), BBC, tx. 1959 - 1965

*The Thirty-Nine Steps*, 1935, Dir: Alfred Hitchcock

*Upstairs Downstairs*, LWT, ITV, tx. 1971- 1975

*The Wednesday Play*, BBC, BBC1, tx. 28 October 1964 – 27 May 1970

‘The Seven O’ Clock Crunch’, Season 1, Episode 32, tx. 30 June 1965.

Writ: David Stone, Prod: James MacTaggart, Dir: Toby Robertson

'Up the Junction', Season 1, Episode 36, tx. 3 November 1965  
Writ: Nell Dunn, Prod: James MacTaggart, Dir: Ken Loach

*World in Action*, Granada Television, ITV, tx. 1963-1998

*Z-Cars*, BBC, tx. 1962-1978